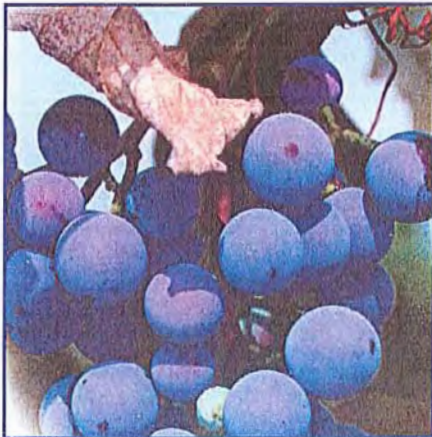
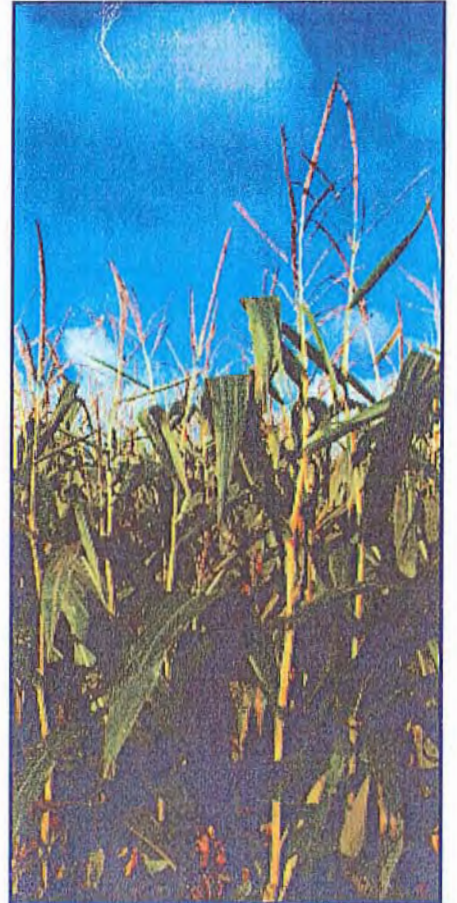


NIAGARA COUNTY

AGRICULTURAL & FARMLAND PROTECTION PLAN



Prepared by:
Niagara County Agricultural & Farmland Protection Board
August 1999

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PREFACE

The Niagara County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board (AFPB) recognizes the key role that agriculture plays daily in the general health and well-being of Niagara County residents. Once our excellent farmland is converted to non-farm uses, it is lost forever to agricultural production. To address the need for protection of this valuable resource, it was determined that a comprehensive protection plan with strategies for implementation was necessary. The plan's goals are to protect farmland and promote the agriculture industry.

The Niagara County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan was developed during 1997 and 1998 by the Niagara County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board in Cooperation with a working group. Though largely *ad hoc* in nature, the working group was well represented by the Niagara County Farm Bureau and the Cornell Cooperative Extension Agriculture Program Committee. The plan was made possible by funding from Niagara County and the New York State Agricultural and Farmland Protection Program administered by the Department of Agriculture and Markets.

The main elements of the Plan involved the following: a survey of agricultural land owners and agricultural business owners; completion of an agricultural resource inventory mapping project, completion of a cost of community services study for the Town of Wilson, research and analysis of issues and protection strategies, completion of public information meetings, and the carrying out of an iterative strategy-building process by the working group. Farmers and agribusiness representatives participated in identifying issues and developing strategies with assistance from Niagara County Department of Planning, Development and Tourism, and from Cornell Cooperative Extension, Niagara County, the contractor for this Plan.

Beginning in 1971 with the Agricultural Districts Law, New York State officials began a series of initiatives to help protect and preserve the State's dwindling farmland base. The Agricultural Districts Law, which currently serves as the primary mechanism to the State's farmland protection efforts, is based on the theory that the best farm neighbor is another farmer. The program provides tax relief and protection from nuisance suits and outside intrusions as incentives to farmers who commit their lands to agricultural use. The law is a direct response to:

New York State Constitution, Article 14, Section 4:

"The policy of the State shall be to conserve and protect its natural resources and scenic beauty and encourage the development and improvement of its agricultural lands for production of food and other agricultural products."

The Agricultural Districts Law was followed in 1992 by the Agricultural Protection Act, the most sweeping farmland protection legislation to date. This act further scrutinized public

projects that may negatively affect agriculture and set in motion the development of county agricultural and farmland protection strategies.

Funding for the development of agricultural and farmland protection plans at the county level began in 1992. Currently, over half of New York's counties have developed, or are currently developing these plans.

In 1996, the State passed legislation to provide counties that have approved plans, or eligible municipalities, with the funding to purchase development rights to farmland. Since 1996, New York State has awarded nearly \$10 million for farmland protection projects. In 1998 the State further committed \$5 million for farmland protection projects from the Environmental Protection Fund and additional resources from the Clean Water/Clean Air Bond Act.

Members of the Niagara County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board:

George Staples, Chairman (AFPB) and Niagara County Soil and Water Conservation District Chairman
James Bittner, Partner, Singer Farms, Inc
William Budde, Director, Niagara County Dept. of Real Property Tax Services
James Coulter, Coulter Farms
Gerald Farnham, Niagara County Legislator
Samuel M. Ferraro, Commissioner, Niagara County Department of Planning, Development and Tourism
LaVerne Haseley, farmer, Town of Niagara
Gerald Helmich, farmer
Paul Lehman, Cooperative Extension
Gary McCollum, McCollum Farms
Gretchen Morgan, Member, American Farmland Trust
Bradley Erck, Niagara County Legislator, served on the Board at the time of application for the grant.

Mission:

"The mission of the Niagara County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board is to be proactive in strengthening a profitable farm economy which will protect land for future generations.

Participants of the Working Group:

- Members of the Niagara County Farm Bureau Board of Directors, Cornell Cooperative Extension Agricultural Program Committee and the Niagara County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board were invited to attend as well as at-large representatives.

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George Staples
Gerald Farnham
Dale F. Dunkelberger
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Sandra Tuck
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Dr. Jerry Bream—Cornell Cooperative Extension, Niagara County
Mr. Tom Clark—Cornell Cooperative Extension, Lake Ontario Fruit Program
Mr. John Farfaglia—Cornell Cooperative Extension, Niagara County
Mr. Nathan Herendeen—Cornell Cooperative Extension, North Western New York Dairy, Field Crops and Livestock Program
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Research and writing:

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COVER:

Photo's by Marge Hilger, Lockport and Gary Treichler, Sanborn, New York
Thanks to Mary Sharon Murphy, Niagara County Department of Planning, Development and Tourism for cover design

Executive Summary

Background

The 1997 United States Census of Agriculture (preliminary) reports a market value for Niagara County agriculture products as \$57.7 million annually. The figure does not include a major greenhouse tomato-growing operation, which also contributes to the agricultural product and to employment. Over 2100 people are employed on farms in Niagara County, according to the Census of Agriculture. Agricultural multipliers of agricultural market value have not been studied specifically for Niagara County, but across New York State, they have been estimated at 1.5 to four times the market value of raw agricultural products. This gives an economic impact of \$87 to \$230 million dollars in the local economy each year.

A study by the State University of New York in 1995 placed agriculture third in Niagara County for sector economic impact. Viable farms contribute to the scenic value and conservation stewardship of Niagara County. They occupy 127,000 acres or 37 percent of the County's land area. In the rapidly changing global food system, they are not to be taken for granted. A number of forces are contributing to the impermanence of much of the land that is farmed. From 1982 to 1997, the amount of land in farms fell 23056 acres or 15.3 percent, a rate that if continuous will offset the productivity gains that have accounted for Niagara's significant agricultural product.

The overall goal of the farmland protection strategy is to maintain a productive open landscape that does not preclude more intensive activity when the demand exists. In the current environment, American farmers are finding themselves in a globally flexible food system with widely fluctuating prices. In what areas besides dairy farming, does New York State have a comparative advantage? Perhaps this question is not answerable with commodity names but rather with the fact that the State and Niagara County are in the middle of a huge concentration of America's population and needs to capitalize on this with more sophisticated access to market channels. In light of the slippage in market value of production in real dollars, efforts to counter the trends we are seeing need to be made.

Significant findings of the Farmland Owner Survey

A survey (See Appendix (A.)) was mailed to 1,688 farmers and rural land owners in Niagara County to study attitudes and perceptions concerning farmland protection policy and to get a better picture of the state of agriculture in the County. It was decided by the Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board to utilize the Niagara County Office of Real Property Tax Services records for property class 100: agricultural farmland or dairy, and property class 322: rural lots of 10 acres or more. 431 completed surveys were returned of which 429 were useful. This resulted in a response rate of 25 percent. The responses are the basis for the strategies that have been identified by a working group as most appropriate to Niagara County.

The survey and research resulted in the identification of significant issues that face agriculture in our County as follows:

- Niagara County has a strong heritage in farming. Over 50 percent of farmers who responded to our survey stated their family had operated a farm in the County for more than 40 years.
- Farmland and its active use for agriculture production contributes significantly to the economy and well being of residents of the County. The community is enhanced through provision of food, incomes, jobs, taxes, wildlife, clean water, scenic vistas, recreation, tourism appeal, and overall quality of life.
- Profitable farming is the most effective means of maintaining and protecting farmland.
- Actively used farmland in the County has become reduced for several decades and will continue to do so if no changes are made.
- Fewer new farmers are encouraged to enter agricultural occupations.
- Some of the most productive and profitable farmlands are in adverse competition with other land uses, such as residential and commercial development.
- Random patterns of rural residential growth fragment the agricultural land base and produce conflicts between farmers and non-farm residents.
- Rented farmland is an important source of acreage for agricultural operations in the County.
- Public cost of providing extended community services for residents throughout the County increases budget pressures for town governments and creates disproportionate tax burdens on farmland owners.
- There is an insufficient level of understanding and support of local agriculture by citizens and public officials.
- Almost 50 percent of the County's farmers are 55 or over. There is little interest by younger generation to take on farming as an occupation.
- The post-1990 population trends saw spurts of population growth take place, in general, in areas outside cities and villages.
- Niagara County's Agricultural Districts encompass more than 52% of the county's land area or 176,106 acres.

While the basic reasons for the presence of productive agriculture in Niagara County are obvious—fertile soils, lake-influenced fruit/vegetable belt climatic conditions, proximity to markets—inescapable historic and geographic factors contribute to the uncertainty many people feel about the future of Niagara County's agriculture.

The unprecedented gains in productivity of American agriculture have resulted in the abandonment of farmland that is marginally productive. As the best land for agriculture

disappears, heavy capital input from the economic resources of society will be required to meet the food and fiber needs of the future.

Recommendations

Niagara County's Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan was developed by the Niagara County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board (AFPB) with inputs from surveys, an informational hearing and an ad hoc working group. The group was well-represented by the Niagara County Farm Bureau, the Cooperative Extension Agricultural Program Committee and the Farmland Board itself.

The Niagara County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan has three major interrelated recommendations. They must be addressed aggressively and simultaneously with the recognition that there is no "silver bullet" that is a sure cure to the problems faced by agriculture. The Plan represents an opportunity for existing agencies and the private sector to exercise maximum creativity and to work together to make Niagara County agriculture a competitive industry in the global marketplace we live and work in.

The three major interrelated areas and recommended actions are:

A. Agricultural Economic Development

As "price-takers," like so many of the nation's wholesale commodity producers, Niagara County farmers are vulnerable to the vagaries of the global food system. The requirements for successful farms consisting of high quality land, access to capital, labor management and availability, and sophistication in marketing can be leveraged with cooperative-type efforts, product promotion and development of niches where Niagara County has a comparative advantage. Multi-source funding for an agricultural economic development coordinator who would spend much of his/her time in a "circuit rider" role with farmers and agri-business would be a significant step. Cultivating cooperative activity, farm markets, Industrial Development Agency business enhancement and retention, among other tasks, are key features of the plan.

Summary of Recommendations

1. *Establish an Agricultural Economic Development Coordinator in Niagara County (see example in Appendix B)*
2. *Strengthen the economic viability of farm businesses through programs on marketing, business planning, retention and expansion and the development of diverse agricultural enterprises supplying both local and distant markets. Area Cooperative Extension specialists have done some of this but viable alternatives developed by the Agricultural Economic Development Coordinator need to be explored in a collaborative way. Cornell's Agricultural Systems Initiative, if funded, will provide marketing specialist and farm management positions.*
3. *Continue to build on a "Buy Local" campaign with collaborative efforts from the New York Farms-funded Western New York logo, Niagara County Environmental Fund grants and Resource Conservation and Development-derived grants.*

4. Continue to stimulate interest by the Niagara County Industrial Development Agency in agricultural business retention and expansion. Stimulate interest by the agricultural community in the Micro Enterprise Assistance Program. Rural Business Enterprise grants through the United States Department of Agriculture, Rural Opportunities, Inc. Intermediary re-lending programs and Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (S.A.R.E.) grants are sources of help. Cooperative Extension and NY FarmNet can counsel farmers on the decisions affecting the future of their business.
5. Work towards a policy of having the Industrial Development Agency favor business development proposals that include a commitment to purchase local agricultural commodities and/or in some way support local agriculture.
6. Encourage farm cooperatives
7. Develop a strong Eastern Niagara County Farmers Market.
8. Support and promote local farm stands, u-pick operations and agri-tourism businesses. Look for ways to capture the attention of the thousands of travelers that cross Niagara County on the I-190 and provide alternative vacation opportunities that retain Niagara Falls visitors.
9. Create a cooperative food processing kitchen to develop value-added products. The Food Venture Institute at the New York State Experiment Station, Geneva, New York (see Appendix C), currently works in collaboration with such satellite centers at Poughkeepsie and Plattsburgh, New York.
10. Develop a County marketing packet for agriculture that extols the advantages of farming in Niagara. Place advertisements in regional and national farm industry publications.
11. The Agricultural Industry Development, Enhancement and Retention Program (AIDER) is a community-based program that first identifies the concerns and barriers to local agricultural firms' vitality via survey and then empowers teams to develop strategies to encourage their growth. The program structure includes firm visits, immediate follow-up, action planning, and then an implementation phase to achieve identified goals. Niagara would be eligible for \$12,000 of Environmental Planning Fund grant money if a 20% county match were provided to fund such a project. Because of the heavy use of volunteers and the cost, the AFPB is not recommending this approach at this time. However, the methodology might be borrowed to implement a lower-cost local process (see Appendix D)
12. High utility rates continue to contribute to the higher cost of doing business in New York State relative to competitors elsewhere in the Nation. A detailed study of energy input costs for farmers would provide a factual basis for recommendations to the Public Service Commission and to governments at the State and local level about the impact of these costs on survival of farm and agricultural processing.

A. Education, Promotion and Public Relations

Various educational strategies for children, adults, consumers, farmers, local decision makers and special groups (i.e. Realtors) are needed. Understanding agriculture as a desirable land use and not the lowest use is a goal of the AFPB. Agriculture has important economic and environmental benefits and can be compatible with other land uses. Amenity value for all of society is a public benefit provided by private sector agriculture.

Summary of Recommendations

- 1 *Develop a media campaign, literature (including informational booklets on Niagara County farms, farm stand brochures, farm tour maps, etc.) and signage designating Niagara County as an agricultural county (also see number 8 above).*
- 2 *Create a high level of awareness and knowledge by community decision makers, farmers and other county residents about economic and societal values of agriculture.*
- 3 *Support training and employment programs to help mentor young people who are attracted to farming but don't know how to get started. Have regular meetings with young farmers to encourage synergism and understanding of resources.*
- 4 *Develop a coordinated public school program to educate youth about agriculture:*
 - *Develop a list of farms offering farm tours to school groups and encourage farm field trips.*
 - *Develop a "Speakers Bureau" of farmers and other professionals available to give presentations at schools, local events and meetings of civic organizations.*
 - *Work more aggressively to get "Agriculture in the Classroom" into the classroom!*
 - *Promote 4-H through Cooperative Extension and distance learning programs.*
 - *Provide incentives for teachers doing agricultural education in the form of contests and prizes for children.*
5. *Educate non-farm neighbors about farming practices and ways to coexist with agriculture.*
 - *Hold educational farm tours so the public can see sound agricultural practices and understand the need for them.*
 - *Provide workshops and mediation programs to help farmers resolve conflicts with neighbors.*
 - *Create fact sheets for distribution at festivals, on tours, etc. to let the public learn about acceptable agricultural practices.*
 - *Use build-out maps to educate the public about the cost of increased community services when farmland is developed.*
 - *Continue decision makers tours like those done in 1997 and 1998 encouraging all legislators and town leaders to attend. Seek funding for a public tour event or at least set up a drive-it-yourself tour.*
 - *Work with tourism interests to promote awareness that agriculture is a major draw for tourists to the area. Capitalize on both the revenue-producing facilities and free points of interest and history that induce tourists to enjoy the country - staying long enough to look for bed-and-breakfast facilities or motels and small town restaurants.*
6. *Provide education in the profession.*
 - *Cooperate with local colleges and schools in such diverse areas as computer education, conversational foreign language (Spanish-speaking workers), retail business planning and use of distance learning facilities (BOCES and public schools) to bring specialists into more frequent contact with farmers.*
 - *Work with Extension specialists and private sector trade on education in estate and land-use planning.*
 - *Provide intergenerational transfer education to avoid situations that have left committed farmers in situations of estate settlement that jeopardizes retaining the business.*
 - *Work with lawyers and landowners to understand the role of land trusts as a way of preserving the intentions in a will to conserve farms and open space.*
7. *Work with the media to present an accurate image of agriculture.*
 - *Provide educational farm tours for the media and general public.*
 - *Establish a photo library of farm activities, scenic landscapes for the media. Give media story leads, both human interest and commercial with well-written press*

releases. Encourage writing within the farm community.

8. *Encourage Realtors to educate new home owners on rural living. Conduct assessors' schools in farm assessment.*
 - *Create an agricultural education program for Realtors and present it through real estate boards*

6. Government Policies and Farmland Protection Strategies

A better understanding of the place of agriculture in townships, even those that consider themselves post-agricultural is needed. All towns should have their own cost of community services study. Even towns with healthy revenues need to consider the implications of further scattered development, the infrastructure to service this development and the bearer of the costs of the development. Taxpayers reach into the same pocket to pay school taxes as the one that pays county and town services. Innovative planning techniques contributing to wise land use should be understood.

The Niagara County AFPB is aware that legislation statewide and nationally is providing funding for the purchase of development rights and conservation easements where plans reflect prioritized agricultural areas. The Board views other strategies as more effective and less expensive than this strategy. Where farming is sufficiently profitable, loyalty to the land is much easier to retain. However, the Board does see merit in modeling for the future, the value of purchase of development rights and tax deductible donations of conservation easements. A prioritization system is suggested that would qualify the County or townships to apply for farmland preservation funding at an appropriate time. Land use controls to preserve farmland will not provide an effective mechanism to maintain a farmland base nor force an industry to exist that is not economically viable.

Summary of Recommendations

1. *Provide a supportive climate for agriculture through education of local government officials for the continuation of farming through public policies and actions on land use and taxation that minimize disincentives to farm and establish a level playing field within the region. Effective action is needed from various levels of government. Avoid the perception that town governments are anti-agriculture by active seeking of opinion on the impact of new regulations on farmers - rather than waiting for them to identify problems at hearings.*
2. *Provide for Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board review of town comprehensive plans prior to formal adoption. The Board will consider build-out analysis of the plan's projected growth and zoning, to consider how it will impact existing agricultural areas and property taxes. Greenprints should be developed locally to supplement existing master plans.*
3. *Allow for creative development plans (PUDs-- Planned Unit Developments) which economize on the amount of land used for buildings which leave land open for future agricultural uses.*
4. *Study means of treating equitably, farmers who are discouraged about the future of farming for their family. They often favor spreading infrastructure to enhance the value of their land and strengthen their retirement. Transfer of development rights and purchase of development rights are relatively undeveloped concepts in Western New York. If open space and agriculture are to be encouraged as an amenity value for a community, a workable methodology must be designed to direct growth.*

5. *Encourage in-fill on vacant parcels with existing infrastructure prior to extending municipal services and developing farmland. Actively support brownfield utilization.*
6. *Conduct farmland protection workshops to educate elected local and appointed officials about protection methods and feasible alternatives in the State and region.*
7. *Pass right-to-farm laws in all townships and the County (Appendix E - example).*
8. *The Niagara County Department of Planning, Development and Tourism could establish criteria that would be used at such time as implementation grant money is available for purchase of development rights programs or other conservation easement protection programs. These criteria would take into consideration Article 25 AAA of New York State Agriculture and Markets Law. From the AFPB's perspective they should also consider General location of agricultural areas to be protected in Chapter 4 of this document. Agricultural protection strategies should be developed on a town-by-town basis with county assistance.*
9. *Increase the quality/diversity of wildlife habitat. A number of government programs are mentioned in Chapter IV. of the report. Private and government assisted efforts will strengthen the image of farmers as good environmental stewards.*
10. *A land evaluation-site analysis (LESA) project should be explored after Geographic Information System tools are available. Study of other New York counties with such analyses can give the County the benefit of their experience, mistakes and successes.*
11. *Create a revolving loan fund for farmers.*

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. A Statement of the Problem

Agriculture in Niagara County is an unsung economic contributor to the rural communities of Niagara County with an annual impact of \$87-\$230 million. It is an environmentally compatible land use when sound management practices are in place. It provides numerous amenities such as fresh products and scenery to urban and rural residents alike. While census figures showing a 25% increase in market value of products between 1992 and 1997 are encouraging, an examination of Table 5 would suggest that growth in market value of agricultural products has not kept pace with inflation. Niagara County needs to decide if it values its agriculture enough to try to stimulate this large but lagging industry. Resignation and fatalism characterize one existing attitude towards agriculture. Creativity and problem solving represent another.

Making farming viable in Niagara County is the major objective of this plan. It does not attempt to do this by land use regulation. It recognizes that a plan may quickly be outdated and gather dust on a shelf. Logical responsible parties are assigned to carry out its suggestions, but no formal commitment has been made by them. The Plan should be updated periodically like many other economic development plans. Some recommendations can be carried out by existing organizations. Others will require new resources and initiative by the private sector. Others may prove more difficult to achieve.

Farmers respond differently to the stresses on their ability to manage their farm profitably. Many seek off-farm employment to supplement their income. Others expand to a level that is truly "big business." Still others develop niche markets, farm markets and value-added products. Finally, many permanently leave farming. Perhaps, by year 2020, there will be only a handful of large acreage farms in Niagara County...and numerous market gardens co-mingled with residential build-out and catering to a vast suburb with only the memory of the contiguous farm country that once characterized Niagara County. This document attempts to identify actions that will retain a desirable working landscape.

In a study done by Lehman (1995), in the Towns of Cambria and Somerset, Niagara County, he found that people have community values they want upheld – that they do care about the lives of future generations. They care about how the community looks and the way it functions. They value farming for its contribution to our food supply and for the amenity value it provides. If they could discover and agree upon means to give farmers incentives not to sell their land to the highest bidder, they would support these incentives.

B. Effects of Non-Farm Development

A significant and critical part of the United States' agricultural system faces an uncertain future. The tremendous productive capacity and efficiency gains leave us with strong resources at this point in our history. But, with each cycle of low farm prices, alternative land uses in the form of speculative holding and outright conversion claim land "ratchet

fashion” with little likelihood of the land returning to agricultural use were the need for this to increase. Estimates of the agricultural land converted annually to non-agricultural uses vary between 800,000 acres to more than 3 million nationwide. More important than the exact rate of conversion is the location of rapidly changing land use. Much of the land being lost is prime or unique farmland, disproportionately located near cities. According to Ralph E. Grossi of the American Farmland Trust, 58 percent of the total U.S. agricultural production comes from counties that the Census Bureau classifies as metropolitan and their adjoining counties. Niagara is classified as a metropolitan county.

According to the Census of Agriculture, New York lost 10,450 farms and over 1.9 million acres of farmland between 1982 and 1997, an area more than twice the size of Rhode Island. Much of this farmland and many of the farms are in “urban influenced” counties. New York’s Lake Plains (of which Niagara County is part) and the Finger Lakes Region is 11th among the 20 most threatened land resource areas in the nation.

However, farmland loss rates have moderated considerably. The nation lost 6.2% in the 1960s, 5% in the 1980s and 2.7% in the 1990s. Luther Tweeten, Ohio State economist, found that only about 26% of the loss of farmland from 1949 to 1992 could be attributed to urbanization nationwide. Productivity and technology in utilizing less acreage more intensively account for the balance (Staley, 1999).

In Niagara County, land in farms declined 2.6% between 1982 and 1987, 7.5% between 1987 and 1992 and 6.0% between 1992 and 1997.

The lack of strong leadership about the United States’ strategic needs for arable land for future generations is not the fault of local government. Local governments are faced with multiple objectives and constraints in their authority. Yet, they need to be concerned about the fiscal problems of old, unfashionable suburbs, and the quality of life in a region with build-out over several counties.

Locally, many farmers are discouraged about the future of farming and it is expected that even more consolidation and premature idling of farms will take place. Is it possible to do anything to counter this trend and still make it worthwhile keeping the land in farming?

Farmland protection is not an aesthetic issue to our farmers. It is an issue of the survival of family farms and farming regions. “Urban sprawl” -- the predominant form of development -- wastefully consumes some of the nation's most fertile land. The effects of urban sprawl on farming are complex, welcomed by some for whom land values are inflated and decried by others who have an attachment to the land. Nationally, several outcomes of sprawl are evident:

- Farmers are forced onto less productive land that requires more costly inputs and/or is farther from urban markets.
- Urban pressure raises the value of agricultural land above its agricultural value, creating enormous estate tax and property tax burdens that make remaining in farming prohibitively costly. This can mean the end of family farms: the next generation simply cannot afford to farm land at development prices. Once the number of farms in an area drops below a critical threshold, essential farm support services close, and a region loses its farm base.

- Local governments struggle under declining revenue. More than a dozen studies by AFT are consistent with other fiscal studies: residential demand for services exceeds the tax revenues housing generates. Farms, in contrast, add more to municipal budgets than they demand in services. Privately owned and managed farmland is far more than open space waiting around to be converted to residential development; it deserves fiscal respect.

Inefficient development is causing the U.S. to lose as much topsoil to urban sprawl as it is saving through federal erosion control programs like the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). Population growth projections for vital agricultural regions such as the Central Valley of California and Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, indicate a severe decline in agricultural productivity if the land is not retained for farming. In the case of the Central Valley, the reduction in agricultural sales has been projected to be \$2.1 billion per year. With the U.S. population expected to jump 50 percent by the mid-21st century and high-quality farmland projected to shrink 13 percent, the nation could become a net food importer instead of a net food exporter within 60 years.

CHAPTER II

NIAGARA COUNTY AGRICULTURE

A. An economic contributor

A drive through Niagara County, notably east or west along Route 31 or 18 is a pleasant experience appreciated by many tourists and local residents alike. With Niagara Falls located within the County's borders, Niagara County is the number two destination for tourists in New York State behind New York City. In 1995 Niagara Falls (the Cataract City) attracted 2.9 million leisure visitors with an economic impact of \$549.1 million¹.

Agriculture-related activities are abundant throughout Niagara County. There are many festivals and fairs that highlight our agricultural character, including the Niagara County Apple Festival which drew a record 40,000 attendees in 1998. The Niagara County Fair, an annual event since 1841, also draws large numbers each year. In 1998 the Niagara County Fair drew 40,000 visitors for the five-day event. The Lewiston Peach Festival, the Wright's Corners Boy Scouts' Strawberry Festival, and Niagara's Apple Country Festival all attempt to capitalize on an agricultural theme. Nostalgia sells!

Niagara County generates a wealth of agricultural crops. Dairy, fruit, vegetable, grain, livestock and horticultural crops are represented in the diversity of agricultural production present. A combination of rich soil and beneficial geographic location have helped make Niagara County 22nd out of 61 counties in New York State in market value of agricultural products (1997 Census of Agriculture). Niagara is proud of its farming heritage...a heritage that is displayed through the many fine family farms that continue to work and produce, generation after generation. Fifty-three percent of farmers responding to our survey reported that their family had been farming in the County forty or more years.

Niagara County farmers are facing many of the same difficulties as farmers across the nation. At this point in the cycle of prices for many agricultural products, prices are very low. United States-Canadian currency relationships, high world production in low-labor cost nations (apples, for example) and more sophisticated means of keeping produce fresh over long distances has made it very difficult for New York farmers to compete. Even while much has been done to alleviate tax burdens for New York farmers, the cost structure and weather characteristics of the State still leave farmers with a comparative disadvantage to many of the prime specialized production regions of the United States and the world. Farmers' wheat is worth \$1.40/bushel. Corn at harvest may be below \$2.00/bushel. Farmers often hope to cover their fixed expenses at the low point of the price cycle and to have enough units of production to do well when prices are strong.

Fruit farmers are faced with a three-fold problem of weather-damaged crops, the threat of competition from under-priced foreign process grade fruit and fruit products and labor problems. Livestock production should be able to survive in Niagara County and Western New York because of its ability to produce abundant high-quality forage and grain. Yet, this high-risk business with narrow margins has not produced enough units of uniformly graded animals to command the best prices at the nearest packinghouses (in Pennsylvania). This represents an area of economic development for consideration in this report.

¹ Visitor Profile Study, D.K Shifflet & Associates Ltd.

The number of farms, in Niagara County, is decreasing while production levels are increasing, (however, according to the survey, with decreasing profits.) Fewer and fewer young people are going into farming, and those who do are increasingly working for larger agricultural enterprises. One large cash crop farmer in the County, who started his operation in 1965, has over the years bought up 45 farms. Between 1982 and 1997, the county lost 406 farms (37 percent) and 23,056 acres (15 percent). Even with inflation and consolidation, there were only 104 farms with sales of \$100,000 or more in 1997 and 119 in 1982.

Each cycle of adversity for the farmer has a filtering effect on survival and the “ratchet effect” of farm loss in down cycles without the start-up of new ones shows the response of Niagara County agriculture to the pattern of ever-increasing concentration and specialization in agriculture wholesale product production. With this gloomy scenario, what possible responses can make a difference in the survival of agriculture? This plan attempts to address this question.

As a natural and economic resource, the benefits of Niagara County’s farmlands are many. Farmland and its active use for agricultural production contributes significantly to the economy and well being of the residents of the County. The community is enhanced through provision of food, incomes, jobs, tax stabilization, wildlife, clean water, scenic vistas, recreation, tourism appeal, and overall quality of life.

Niagara County farmers have a lot to be proud of. In 1997, the County was the leading producer of plums, prunes, sweet cherries, peaches and pears in the State; it was second in production of tart cherries, third in pears and fourth in apples and peaches. Niagara County was 9th in the State in vegetables, sweet corn and melons, 7th in corn for grain, and 8th in wheat acreage according to the 1997 Census of Agriculture.

Niagara County has 119 fruit farms with 620,000 fruit-bearing apple trees which account for 9.2 percent of all apple trees in New York State. Niagara County’s apple trees produced 88.6 million pounds of apples in a recent year with a value of \$10.8 million for the County.

Over \$57 million of agricultural product sales are reported by the 1997 Census of Agriculture. According to an economic impact study done by the State University at Albany, the County’s agriculture is ranked third in importance as an income generator (Niagara Gazette, November 30, 1995). Economic multipliers are a measure of how dollars generated by primary production bounce around in the local economy through retail input and output firms. Cornell University studies elsewhere in the State typically reflect, depending upon the geography and commodity mix, a 1.5-4.0 multiplier. Farm labor was paid \$9,020,000 in 1997. This, of course, does not include management income.

Agriculture also contributes to the County’s economy in other important ways. As mentioned earlier, agricultural land generates a tax-base advantage for local towns because it consistently generates more tax revenue than it requires back in service expenditures (including schools). The scenic open space and rural character it offers help make Niagara County attractive to developers and a still-pleasant drive for tourists.

Were the agricultural industry located on a fixed site, and threatening to leave the County, assistance and incentives would be fast to keep it here. Unfortunately for the agriculture industry, it is decentralized and fragmented. When one farm leaves, no one is too concerned. The slow exodus of farming goes unnoticed. As many farms leave over a period of time, they take with them the “critical mass” that is necessary to maintain the agricultural infrastructure that is necessary to any farming area, including feed stores, equipment dealers, veterinarians, etc. And as neighboring farmers see farmsteads idled or

sold, they too “see the writing on the wall” and stop investing in their own operation. It is critical that local government officials and IDAs view agriculture in our area for what it is...an *industry* that contributes greatly to our economic and social well being.

B. Major Land Resource Area

Encompassing 12,600 square miles, most of the Ontario Plain and Finger Lakes Region of Western New York, in which Niagara County is located, is in farms. This region is identified as a Major Land Resource Area (MLRA) by the American Farmland Trust. The Ontario Plain and Finger Lakes region has relatively homogeneous patterns of soil, climate, water resources, land use and type of farming. In addition, the region contains *prime* and *unique farmland*.

The USDA’s *prime farmland* designation, is land that is most suitable for producing food, feed, forage, fiber and oilseed crops. American Farmland Trust defines *unique farmland* as land used to grow vegetables, grapes and horticultural crops, including fruits, nuts and berries, that have unique soil and climatic requirements. (Farming on the Edge published by the American Farmland Trust in 1993 and developed by AFT and the Social Science Research Center at Northern Illinois University.)

The American Farmland Trust further identified the top 20 *most* threatened MLRAs . These areas represent only 7 percent of the nation’s land, but account for 21 percent of the nation’s prime or unique farmland. The Ontario Plains and Finger Lakes Region (including Niagara County) is ranked 11 of the top 20 most threatened MLRAs, due to the high amount of development pressure on its farmlands. In 1974 The Census of Agriculture stated there were 155,835 acres in farms in Niagara County. In 1997, the Census found 127,355 acres in farms in this County. This cumulative loss equals 28,480 acres of productive farmland in 23 years. During that same time period the number of farms reduced from 1,228 to 687.

C. Niagara County Farm Characteristics (1974-1997)

Farming is a business that produces commodities for the market place. Niagara County farms produce various livestock and crop commodities. Livestock commodities include: milk, dairy cows, heifers, horses, beef cattle, poultry, eggs, rabbits, ratites, sheep, hogs, horse breeding, llamas, wool and elk. Crop commodities include: hay, soybeans, wheat, grain corn, apples, peaches, pears, plums & prunes, cherries, strawberries, blueberries, honey, cabbage, cider, corn, grapes, pumpkins, raspberries, snap beans, soybeans, squash, tomatoes, greenhouse and horticultural specialties, including cut flowers, potted and bedding plants and Christmas trees and fuel wood to name some of them.

While fruit and cash crop production remains strong in Niagara County, diversification into other commodities is occurring. Greenhouse and horticultural specialties, organically raised poultry and you-pick operations are just a few of the more successful niche markets that have been developed by Niagara County farmers. There is a growing interest in developing and expanding niche markets.

Table (1): Comparison of farms, land in farms, total cropland, percent of county represented by cropland/farmland and cropland harvested in Niagara County: 1974-1997

	1974	1982	1987	1992	1997
Approx. land area in county(acres) (excl. water bodies)*	339,571	339,571	339,571	339,571	339,571
Number of farms (all)	1228	1093	923	749	687
Land in farms (acres)	155,835	150,411	146,537	135,494	127,355
Total cropland (acres)	130,806	127,055	124,686	117,050	111,878
Cropland harvested (acres)	100,955	97,973	86,671	77,800	90,080
Percent of total county acreage represented by land in farms (%)	45.9	44.3	43.2	39.9	37.5
Percent of total county acreage represented by cropland	38.5	37.4	36.7	34.5	32.9

* Some sources use an older figure of 334,720 acres rather than 339,571 as the county's acreage. The larger figure is from the Niagara County Department of Public Works.

Table (2): Land in farms (acres) - NYS and Niagara County - Percentage change by census year

Year	New York State	% Change	Niagara County	% Change
1982	9,189,559		150,411	
1987	8,416,228	-8.4	146,537	-2.6
1992	7,458,015	-11.4	135,494	-7.5
1997*	7,254,470	-2.7	127,355	-6.0

* Preliminary Census

Table (3): Number of farms - Niagara County - Percentage change by census year

Year	Number of farms	% change
1982	1093	
1987	923	-15.6
1992	749	-18.9
1997*	687	-8.3

* Preliminary Census

Table (4): Cropland and harvested cropland - Niagara County - Percentage change by census year

Year	Total Cropland (acres)	% Change	Harvested Cropland (acres)	% Change
1982	127,055		97,973	
1987	124,686	-1.9	86,671	-11.3
1992	117,050	-6.1	77,800	-10.2*
1997**	111,878	-4.4	90,030	+15.8

*One of the wettest years in recent history

** Preliminary Census

Table (5) Market Value of Agricultural Products, Niagara County - Consumer Price Indexes (CPI) - Prices paid and received by farmers and percentage changes

Year	Mkt. Value \$	% Change	CPI*	%Change	Prices** Received by Farmers	% Change	Prices Paid by Farmers **	% Change
1982	41,655,000		96.5		609		1090	
1987	42,323,000	+1.6	113.6	+17.7	578	-5.1	1113	+2.1
1992	46,026,000	+3.7	140.3	+23.5	626	+10.0	1348	+21.1
1997	57,726,000	+25.4	160.5	+14.4	678	+8.3	1558	+15.6

**Base 1910-14=100 (Note: This historic base ignores gains in productivity and efficiency on the farm that offset at least some of the CPI and Prices Paid by Farmers as rough measures of inflation.)

* Base 1982-84=100CPI Detailed Report - US Dept of Commerce - US City Average (CPI-U) All Urban Consumers;

Change in Market Value, 1982-97 = +38.6%; Change in CPI, 1982-97=+66.3%; Change in Prices Received by Farmers, 1982-97=+11.3%; Change in Prices Paid by Farmers, 1982-97=42.9%.

Parity ratio: The Parity ratio is the ratio of the Prices Received Index, 1910-14=100, to the Index of Prices Paid by Farmers for Commodities and Services, Interest, Taxes and Wage Rates on a 1910-14=100 base. The Parity Ratio is a measure of price relationships, not a measure of farm income or of farmer's total purchasing power, or of a farmers welfare. The well being of the farm community depends upon a number of factors other than price relationships such as changes in production efficiency and technology, quantities of farm products sold, and supplementary income, including income from off-farm jobs and federal farm programs

Table (6) Parity Ratio by Year

Year	Ratio
1982	1:4.8
1987	1:5.4
1992	1:7.2
1997	1:8.8

Table (7) Farms by Value of Sales* - Percent by sales cohort - Niagara County

Sales \$	1982	%	1987	%	1992	%	1997	%
<2500	290	26.5	256	27.7	218	29.0	175	25.5
2500-4999	205	18.8	128	13.9	95	12.7	84	12.2
5000-9999	164	15.0	138	15.0	101	13.5	91	13.3
10000-24999	143	13.1	149	16.1	103	13.8	102	14.8
25000-49999	91	8.3	57	6.2	65	8.7	88	12.8
50000-99999	81	7.4	75	8.1	70	9.3	43	6.3
100000 or >	119	10.9	120	13.0	97	13.0	104	15.1
Total	1093	100.0	923	100.0	749	100.0	687	100.0

* So defined as those with sales of \$1000 or more

Sources: United States Census of Agriculture - United States Department of Agriculture

D. Statistical Data

Active Farmland Acreage by Town

The Niagara County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan grant proposal included conducting air photo interpretation with the newest air photos available. The contractor for this phase of the work, used 1995 black and white photos from the United States Department of Agriculture, Farm Service Agency. Cross-referencing was also done with working copies of 1:660 black and white air photos from 1990.

The 1968 data is from Cornell University Air Photo Interpretation alone. A 1979-82 Niagara County Environmental Council volunteer project utilizing Cornell University Resource Information Laboratory air photo interpretation is also shown. Value judgements about agricultural use were made for parcels where "it's not clear if the owner

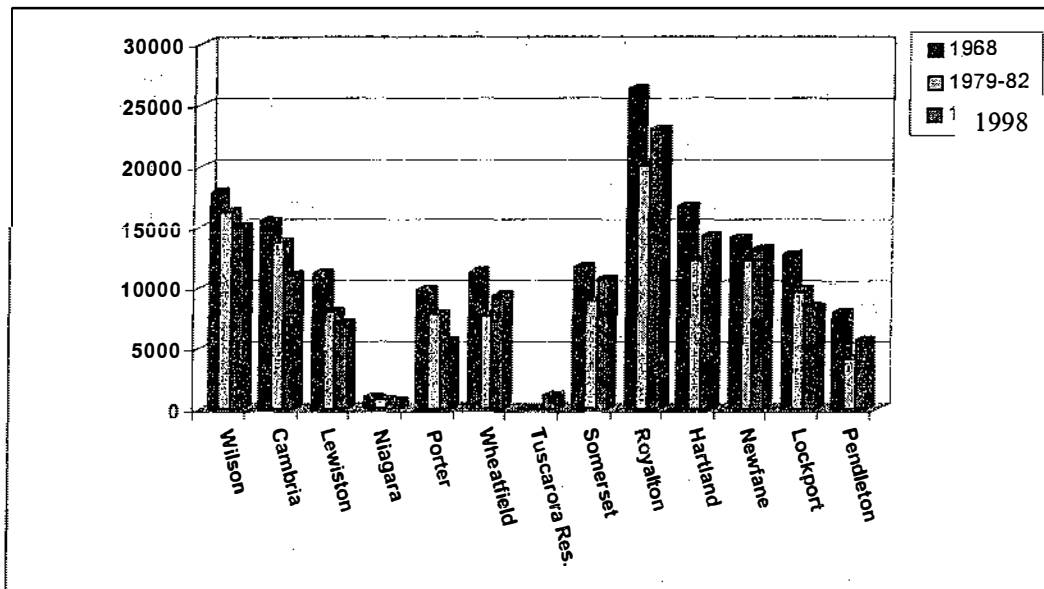
is doing anything or not," where grass is mown for non-agricultural purposes or even a single crop of grass hay is harvested. The three measurements of "land in crops" differ from the respective three most recent Censuses of Agriculture by 4-10%

Interested parties may view the photos, which also show orchard land (part of active), agricultural districts, sewer and water lines, township boundaries, town zoning and soil quality. They are at the Niagara County Department of Planning, Development and Tourism.

The following table and graph summarize active agricultural acreage by township in Niagara County for three different time periods—1998, 1979-82 and 1968. On the whole, active agricultural acreage continues to decline in most townships. As indicated above, there are many variables that should temper the conclusions drawn from this data. Measurement error can be due to differing scale of maps used, quality of field checks, and judgement of "farming activity." It is noted that for the 1998 data, seven cash crop growers farming tracts of land in several townships were asked to examine the air photo interpretation by the contractor. Adjustments downwards were made. This adjustment was the net of finding both newly cultivated acreage and that judged to be "inactive." It is not clear whether additional acreage added to active farmland represent prime farmland. In many cases it represent the ability of a cash crop grower to rent land on a year-to-year basis from a non-farm landowner. Favorable weather at the time of plowing influences the amount of rented land. Fluctuations of only a few thousand acres between one time period and another should not be viewed as significant.

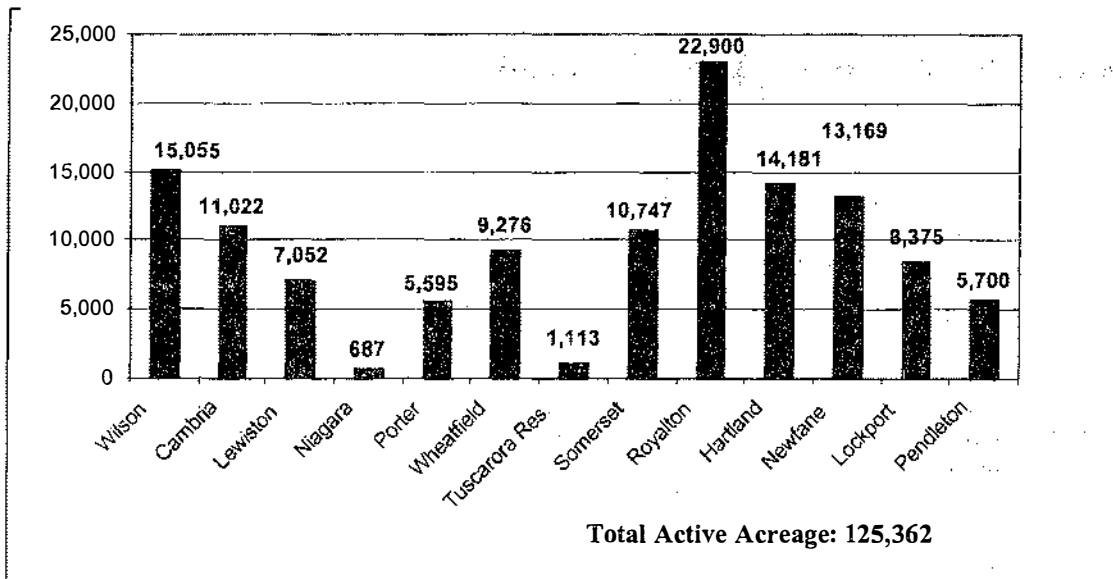
Clearly there are many thousand acres of less active farmland in 1998 than 1968 in Niagara County. It is not within the scope of this study to analyze active farmland on farmer-owned parcels versus non-owned. A geographic information system (GIS) might allow more systematic analysis in the future. The perception of rapid urbanization from strip development that dominates many of the roads in Niagara County has apparently not yet offset the significant availability of "back lands" which are farmable even though road frontage is taken. This development pattern is not without its problems for agriculture, however.

Active Farmland Acreage by Town 1968, 79-82, 1998 (fig 1)



¹ 1998 counts were tabulated by Farmland Protection Plan air photo interpretation contractor Cathy Eick; 1979-82 counts include acreage of orchards (Ao), Vineyards (Av), Horticulture (Ah), High Intensity (Ac) Cropland/Pasture (Ac), and Specialty Farm (Ay)= [Active Agriculture] but excluding Permanent Pasture (Ap); 1968 counts are derived from Land use and Natural Resources (LUNR) Data, Cornell University.

Active Farmland Acreage by Town (1998 fig 2)



E. LAND IN AGRICULTURAL DISTRICTS

Of the 20 municipalities in Niagara County, 12 municipalities have land located within Agricultural Districts. Niagara County's Agricultural Districts encompass more than 52% of the county's land area or 176,106 acres. Currently the following Agricultural Districts are in effect: (See Exhibit 1 for Agricultural District Map)

Table 8. ACREAGE BY DISTRICT

Agricultural District #2 (Somerset, Hartland, Royalton)	37,381 acres
Agricultural District #4 (Newfane, Harlant, Royalton, Lockport)	34,828 acres
Agricultural District #6 (Cambria, Lockport, Pendleton, Whealfield)	22,283 acres
Agricultural District #7 (Wheatfield, Niagara, Lewiston, Pendleton)	17,449 acres
Agricultural District #8 (Porter, Wilson)	38,979 acres
Agricultural District #9 (Royalton)	25,186 acres
<hr/>	
County Total	176,106 acres

F. SOILS AND AERIAL PHOTO INTERPRETATION

The matrix shown in Appendix (F) describes all soils found in Niagara County. Defining the term "prime farmland" varies with the source of the definition. Work leading up to the National Agricultural Lands Study (USDA-SCS) in 1979 produced definitions by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) noted in footnote (2) of this Appendix. Maps of Niagara County, produced as the result of the application of this definition, show that most of Niagara County contains prime farmland, or soils of additional statewide importance.

When USDA defined prime farmlands (drained and undrained) are measured, 198,716 acres or 62.1% of Niagara County's mapped soils (319,947 acres) are prime. When prime without drainage improvement soils are measured, they constitute only 75,985 acres or 23.7% of Niagara County mapped soils.

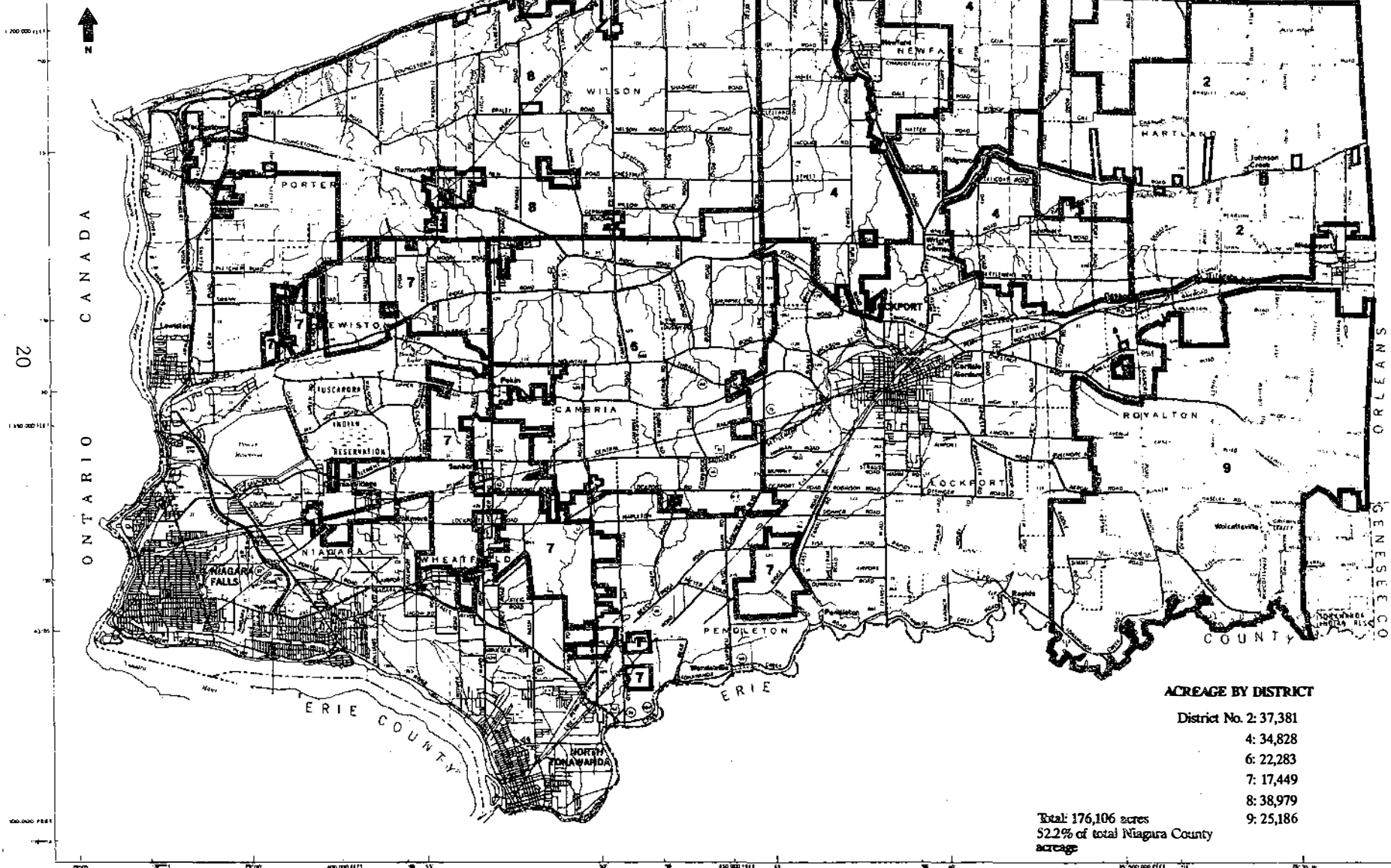
The overlays to the 1:1320 air photos, (47 photos 2'x2') developed as part of this project, were colored by a grouping of the 10 soil categories from the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets Agricultural Land Classification system (Appendix (F)). Breakdown for this project was as follows: prime (1-4), important agricultural soils (5-7), and soils unsuitable for agriculture (8-10). The New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets source is the preferred basis for this report as it is the most recent and interfaces with considerable economic data gathered by Cornell University. For

Exhibit 1

AGRICULTURAL DISTRICTS

February 1999

Nugara County Department of Planning, Development & Tourism



the most part, there is agreement between prime soils as defined by USDA and those of New York State Agriculture and Markets, but a net difference of 5.9% between USDA prime (drained) and Agriculture and Markets (drained) exists. 94,840 acres or 29.6% of mapped soils are prime by the Ag & Markets system. Other farmable soils (groups 5-7) total 203,779 acres or 63.7% of the mapped County area. 93.3% of Niagara County's mapped soils, then, are farmable (63.7% + 29.6%). The main limitation many of these soils have is drainage. It is not economical in the present business climate to install infrastructure that will provide adequate outlets for drainage water removal nor to improve internal drainage enough to grow more than forages. Indeed, this whole discussion ignores the role of wetlands as important conservation elements of our ecosystem.

Much of the acreage of the more marginal soils, agriculturally speaking, has varying degrees of wood lot and second growth vegetation present that would require considerable cost for clearing in addition to drainage improvement. Wetland restrictions prohibit some of this return to active agriculture. The country will need considerably more demand for agricultural products to reverse the course of idling of this marginal acreage.

A county-wide geographic information system (GIS) may be useful in measuring what portion of prime farmland is now occupied by permanently converted non-farm uses. A final note—all definitions of "prime" above exclude 3,336 acres of Hamlin silt loam soils. While treated as group 1 by Ag & Markets (the best of soils), the acreage of this soil is found primarily in narrow, inaccessible bands along creeks or gullies or is of otherwise variable quality. For this county, it might be grouped with alluvial soils. If it were included with prime acreage, it would be equivalent to .1% of the mapped soils of the county.

G. FARMER/FARMLAND OWNER SURVEY RESULTS

This survey was mailed to 1,688 farmers and farmland owners in Niagara County to study attitudes and perceptions concerning farmland protection policy. The responses also allow an analysis of trends, problems and the future outlook for County farms. It was decided by the Agricultural Farmland Protection Board to utilize the Niagara County Office of Real Property Tax Service records for property class 100—agricultural farmland or dairy, and property class 322—rural lots of 10 acres or more. 80 percent of the respondents were from property class 100; 20 percent from property class 322. Of the number mailed, 431 completed surveys were returned of which 429 were useful. This resulted in a return rate of 25 percent. Following is a summary of the responses.

Niagara County's farming heritage has deep roots. Over 50% of the respondents said that their family has been farming in Niagara County 40 or more years. And many families said they want to continue working the land, some full-time and some part time. However, if farming is to have a strong future in the county, more young people have to climb on the tractor. The survey found that 180 respondents are between 50 and 69 years, 118 are between 40 and 49, only 58 are between 30 and 39 and just 61 are between 20 and 29. Another 45 are between 70 and 79, and 16 said they are past 80. One survey respondent said, "We need to attract more young people into agriculture." Another said, "We need to find more dependable help."

Other findings include:

- 81 percent said they would keep their lands in commercial farming.
- 120 said that a family member would continue farming after the current operator retires, but 258 said no family member would carry on.

- 140 said they are full-time farmers, while 151 said they are part-timers.
- 39 percent of the respondents said they would not sell some or all of their land for non-farm use, but 61 percent said they would.
- 171 farmers said they would sell their land if the price were higher than its farm value, but 258 said they would not.
- 83 said they had sold farmland in the last five years, mostly in 1- to 13-acre parcels, but 320 had not sold farmland.
- 89 said that Niagara County does have enough economic incentives to invite agri-business expansion, but 271 thought not.

On balance, these findings suggest that while some farm losses have been occurring in Niagara County, as in most other places, a solid core of people expect to continue farming in one form or another. If the money is there, the farms will be there.

Some other findings:

- Though a significant amount of acreage in each town is rented to farmers, 207 respondents said that the significance of rented farmland to farm operations is non-essential; other options available.
- 204 respondents strongly agreed that agriculture/farm operations pay more local taxes than they receive in local services, while 195 agreed, 22 disagreed and 4 strongly disagreed.
- 87 percent said that water was available to service their property and 12 percent said sewer was available. One percent said neither was available.
- 246 owned more than 10 acres with sales exceeding \$10,000 and 185 did not.
- Sales have been increasing while at the same time, profits declining.
- The majority, 214, said that agri-tourism could help promote the economic vitality of farming in the County. However 103 felt not.
- 285 have not had complaints from neighbors regarding farm practices. 81 said they had.
- 42 percent of respondents said farm income was between \$0 to \$10,000. 17 percent put farm income between \$10,001 to \$25,000 and 9 percent put income between \$50,001 and \$100,000.
- 42 percent said they expect the possible sale of farmland as a source of retirement funds. 58 percent said they did not.
- A strong majority, 356, felt the farmland protection elements of New York State's agriculture districting program should be strengthened.

- Another strong majority, 314, said they would favor local, state or federal legislation, which restricts development on prime and important farmland.
- And 74 percent said they would support using public funds to provide for farmland protection efforts.
- 292, a majority of respondents felt it is "very important" to protect good farmland for ongoing agricultural use.

The survey asked some questions which invited comments. Here are some of the questions and responses, in condensed form:

How can farm profitability be improved?

End imports of food that can be grown here...shift the property tax burden...lower utility costs...grow hay and other crops that can be sold locally...look to bio-mass and wood pellet production...let the free market reign and get government out of agriculture...break up supermarket chains that control markets...help greenhouse operators by reducing natural gas costs...improve cooperation between large and small farms...control production all the way to the consumer...encourage more young people to consider farm careers.

Have you had complaints from non-farm neighbors?

I'm sure I will, as my neighbors sell lots to city people who want to enjoy the country...all-hour farming and cows crossing the road...cabbage smells...people building homes near bee yards do not like the bees...spraying at night...pesticide application...control dust and odor and stop work at 6 p.m....too many people and machines crossing the road...calling the cops instead of the farmer when an animal gets loose...grain dryer noise.

Would you consider diversifying if technical and financial aid were available? If so, into what area?

Convert into a golf course...consider raising a niche product such as herbs...farming in a climate-controlled facility...open a milk and dairy store...establish an auction like Springville's.

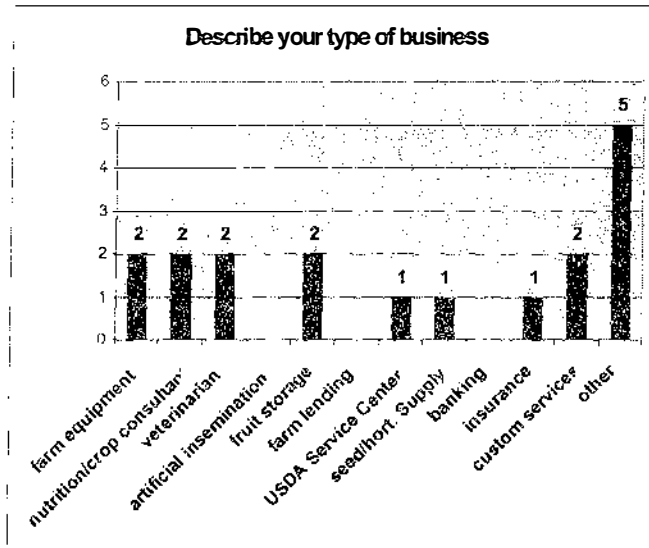
Do you expect to keep you land in commercial farming? If not, why?

If sewers were installed, we would sell lots...Yes, we cannot get dependable help...I have an odd-shaped lot with ditches that no one wants to work...Will stay as long as someone will rent my land...I have a good off-farm job and the farm is a good place to escape...the farm will have to go because I do not have the income to pay school and property taxes...most of my land is in the Conservation Reserve Program and I intend to re-forest it...will sell to a developer or farmer.

H. Agribusiness Survey

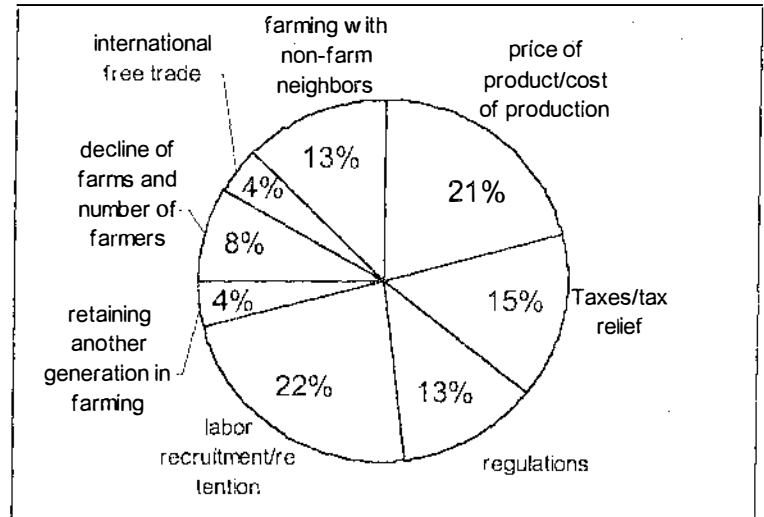
Survey of Agribusiness and Other Organizations Serving Niagara County Farms

Question 1: Describe your type of business



Those who selected "other" described their operations as follows: Hardware supplier; full-service processing, marketing, dairy cooperative; agricultural chemical sales; accounting/tax preparation; fruit & vegetable bin mfg.

Question 2: What are the three most important issues facing farmers in Niagara County as it relates to your business/operation?



QUESTIONS 3 THROUGH 5 (condensed):

Question 3: The structure of American agriculture and the global economy have not helped most Niagara County farmers in the short run. What is your outlook for the future of agriculture in Niagara County?

More small "truck" farms ... to supplement incomes...

Almost 80% of my business are agriculturally related. When the small and large fruit grower has to leave fruit on the ground due to depressed prices caused by dumping of foreign concentrate, then my sales go down the drain as well. Free trade is a wonderful thing if the playing field is level. Unfortunately, the USA is not playing by the same rules (or lack thereof) as the rest of the world.

I believe that all but a few of the small farms will survive in this area. The only way to continue is to get very large ...

Consolidation will continue...

I am very optimistic about the future for the good, productive managers.

Trade issues are not likely to change soon. Oversupply of apples and weak Asian markets impact the entire industry (directly or indirectly). However, growers can still be profitable growing for specific markets.

I feel the outlook is poor due to poor land and urban encroachment.

Niagara County has some excellent land for crop production and lake effect for favorable fruit production. I hope agriculture will be protected so it can stay.

We expect to see a decline in the number of farms and future generations going into farming unless the price of products increase to override the costs of production.

Unless prices improve a great deal the future is not good.

Our government needs to recognize that our farmers must have a level field to compete with the rest of the world...

Farmers are finally getting the attention of their elected officials...Government policy, after weather, has the greatest impact on individual farm income. Lawmakers need to realize farmers need fair markets and prices, totally free markets invite abuses. With policy changes we should be optimistic about the future of local agriculture.

Question 4: Some areas of the country have developed supported positions for marketing specialists who serve small farmers in marketing needs by providing advice and services. Would such an approach be useful here?

If local farmers could capture a greater market share of local consumers' food budgets, it should benefit both producers and consumers...

I believe the new dues structure for the hort. Society is a good first step to that end.

WNY is not major player in any specific crop or commodity, so you can market all you want, but if you are not the country's leading producer of apples, milk or cabbage, the price you get will be dictated by others.

Depends on the program (and if it's supported) and individual providing services. Past programs have tended to be "niche" oriented, benefiting a few and not affecting majority of growers.

Possibly—small farmers need to market to retail customers as much as possible.

Marketing specialists? Who is kidding whom here? Supported by whose dollars? Who fills this position? Cooperative Extension? New recruits to Cooperative Extension, get real!

Question 5: Please suggest any "strategies" that come to mind which in combination can strengthen agriculture as an industry in Niagara County. A list of suggested ones from farmers here and elsewhere is available.

Work to market more Niagara County products in Niagara County grocery stores and identify these products with the Niagara County Brand.

Require any imported food (ag production) to meet the same regulations (restrictions) that local farmers must comply with.

Manure management that is workable for farmers.

Suggest those who can't make it farming, get out and stop sucking tax money in their sinking ship.

Recognize your market and marketing trends. Grow for specific markets. Remove or discontinue unprofitable crops/varieties. Concentrate farm resources on profitable enterprises. Diversify when possible (into crops, offering marketing services, direct marketing, etc.). Look at your business and products objectively. Seek advice from service providers, Extension and others. Manage risks.

Continue to build positive relationship with non-farming community. New "smart-plan" for controlled, measured, beneficial growth within farming and non-farming community.

Develop a list of ideas for diversification and clever niches that might play to the nearby urban populations: sleigh rides, Halloween theme farms, u-pick Christmas trees, berries etc.; livestock/poultry for specific ethnic tastes, mazes. Lots of others including: sheep/wool dying & spinning, custom slaughter, specialized meat products, horse board/riding lessons. Lots of folks want to play at farming on a small scale, but lack the ideas to set themselves apart.

Although I believe that most of the people in agriculture around here have already joined together in one kind of marketing group or another, this is probably the only way to survive. Because of my concerns listed previously, I don't have a lot of faith in the ultimate outcome. The small farm will become a museum piece.

Property tax abatement for farming—provide tax incentives for the capital & labor investment.

I. Cost Community Services Study for the Town of Wilson

As part of the Niagara County and Farmland Protection Plan contract, a cost of community services study was done with the cooperation of the Town of Wilson, Niagara County. To view the complete survey see Appendix (G.). The results of the study are that for every dollar of local government revenue attributable to residential land use, \$1.10 is expended by local governments in providing services to the residential land use category.

Conversely, for every dollar of local government revenue attributable to commercial/industrial land use, only \$.30 is expended by local governments in providing services to this category. \$.57 out of every dollar generated in revenue is expended in providing local government services for the agricultural/vacant land category.

To contrast this rural township with a heavily-populated one, the results of the "Cost of Services/Revenues Generated Land Use Study," done in March, 1992 on the Town of Amherst, Erie County by Fox & Company for the Industrial Development Agency are shared.

Amherst, New York

Land Use Category	Revenues	Expenditures	Ratio
Residential	\$289,489,668	\$334,458,915	1/1.16
Com'l/Indus*	68,518,783	25,924,373	1/.38
Open Land	4,388,404	2,013,567	1/.46
Total	\$362,396,855	\$362,396,855	

*Includes agricultural land

Wilson, New York

Land Use Category	Revenues	Expenditures	Ratio
Residential	\$5,392,913	\$5,947,795	1/1.10
Commercial	504,716	148,954	1/.30
Agric/Vacant	460,741	261,621	1/.57
Total	\$6,358,370	\$6,358,370	

CHAPTER III

DESCRIPTION OF NIAGARA COUNTY

A. BRIEF OVERVIEW

Niagara County is located in the northwestern corner of New York State. A populace of 221,219 (1996 Estimate U.S. Census Bureau and Empire State Development) occupies 339,571 acres of land in the County.

The area was first settled as a military outpost to control the strategic waterway to the mid-continent, and to hold the area for the respective colonial power. Agriculture and forest industries were next established to exploit the region's natural resources, and the development of rudimentary industries to process forest products and locally produced grain were set up along the County's many water courses. As the harnessing of the Niagara Falls' power occurred, strong impetus was given to industrial development, growing and expanding the area's economic base at a very rapid pace. Today, excellent transportation systems, abundant waterpower, a highly diversified manufacturing base, tourism, plus an extensive agricultural industry all contribute to the economy of Niagara County.

Topographically, the County is divided into the Ontario and Huron Plains, which are subdivisions of the lake plains that surround each of the Great Lakes. The Ontario Plain extends from the shore of Lake Ontario south to the foot of the Niagara Escarpment. The Huron Plain extends from the crest of the Escarpment southward into Erie County. The Escarpment's cliff-like bluffs, several hundred feet high in places, extend east to west a distance of over 30 miles. Other than the escarpment area, the land surface is fairly uniform. The escarpment also is the drainage divide across the County. Streams on the Ontario Plain flow northward into Lake Ontario. The drainage of the Huron Plain is southward into the Niagara River and Tonawanda Creek, which forms the border between Niagara and Erie Counties.

Lake Ontario, the northern boundary of the County, offers scenic vistas and a moderating climatic influence on some of the most productive orchard land in New York State. The growing season can be as long 154 days (frost-free) and with 2200-2600 growing degree-days (base 50 degrees F.). Winter temperatures average a little above normal for the region due to the lake tempering effect. Rainfall in the area is slightly below the average for New York State at about 31 inches a year.

These favorable conditions help Niagara County to remain as a net exporter of fruits, vegetables, grains, hay and soybeans to other parts of the state, Ohio, Pennsylvania, New England, the South and some foreign countries. The County is 22nd among 61 New York counties in agricultural product value according to the 1997 Census of Agriculture.

Niagara County had 637 farms in 1997; of these, 104 reported sales of \$100,000 or more per year. In 1996, Niagara County ranked first in New York State in production of plums/prunes, peaches, pears, and sweet cherries; second in the production of tart cherries; fourth in apples; sixth in grapes. The county was also second in oats production and sixth in wheat; first in greenhouse vegetables; fourth in bedding plants and strawberries. Based on acreage, Niagara ranked seventh in corn for grain, 8th in wheat, 9th in vegetables sweet corn and melons, and 11th in nursery and greenhouse production. The county ranked first in the State (1992 Census of Agriculture) in percent of produce direct

marketed (as opposed to wholesale or for processing). Niagara County was 12th in the State in number of farmers and 27th among 61 in land in farms. Niagara is one of the outstanding agricultural counties in New York State because of its productivity and agricultural diversity. This diversity of the County's agriculture has allowed many operations to offset losses in one enterprise with gains in another.

Several trends and conditions warrant consideration of farmland protection measures in Niagara County. The post-1990 trends saw spurts of population growth take place, in general, in areas outside cities and villages. One of the least-appreciated facts about the County is that the decades of out-migration of industry to the sun-belt and elsewhere has not changed the basic reasons for the presence of an agricultural industry. Fertile soils, lake influenced fruit/vegetable belt conditions and proximity to markets, are conditions that are not found in every county of New York State. This physical capital which is our land has not gone elsewhere although much of it has been permanently converted to non-agricultural uses.

B. POPULATION

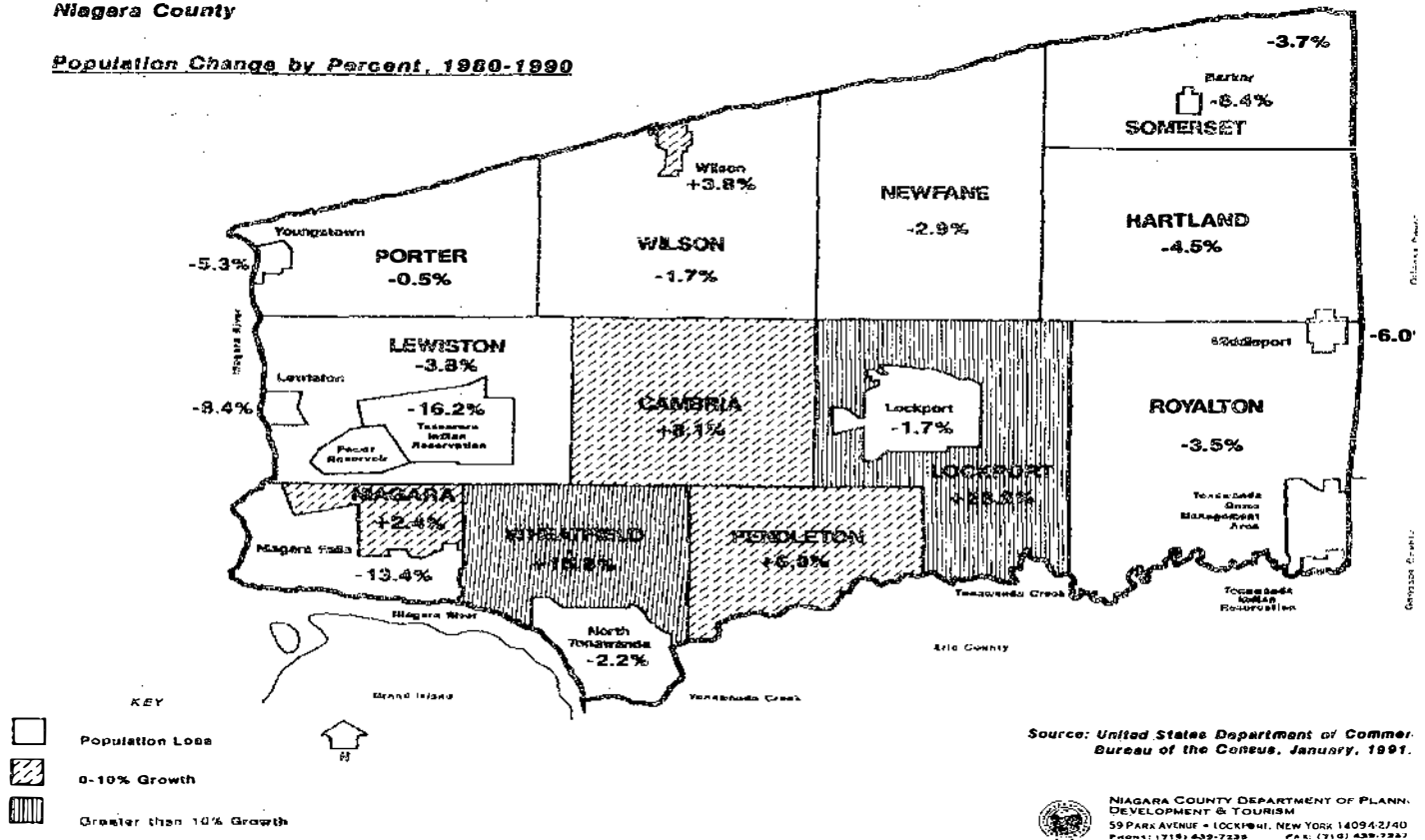
Niagara County's 1990 U.S. Census population of 220,756 ranks it as the 17th most populated county out of a total of 62 counties in New York State. Niagara County's residential population has seemingly stabilized during the 1990's, having suffered losses over the previous three decades. From a peak population of 242,269 in 1960, Niagara County gradually lost population to find its 1990 U.S. Census population at 220,756.

Population by Municipality 1980 & 1990 (Table 9)

CITIES	1980	1990	GAIN/LOSS	% CHANGE
Lockport	24,844	24,426	(418)	-1.68
Niagara Falls	71,384	61,840	(9,544)	-13.37
N. Tonawanda	35,760	34,989	(771)	-2.16
TOWNS	1980	1990	GAIN/LOSS	% CHANGE
Cambria	4,419	4,779	360	8.15
Hartland	4,105	3,911	(194)	-4.73
Lewiston	16,219	15,453	(766)	-4.72
Lockport	12,942	16,596	3654	28.23
Newfane	9,268	8,996	(272)	-2.93
Niagara	9,648	9,880	232	2.40
Pendleton	4,726	5,010	284	6.01
Porter	7,251	7,110	(141)	-1.94
Royalton	7,765	7,453	(312)	-4.02
Somerset	2,701	2,655	(46)	-1.70
Wheatfield	9,609	11,125	1516	15.78
Wilson	5,792	5,761	(31)	0.54
VILLAGES	1980	1990	GAIN/LOSS	% CHANGE
Barker	535	569	34	6.36
Lewiston	3,326	3,048	(278)	-8.36
Middleport	1,995	1,876	(119)	-5.96
Wilson	1,259	1,307	48	3.81
Youngstown	2,191	2,075	(116)	-5.29
COUNTY	227,354	220,756	(6,598)	-2.9%

Niagara County

Population Change by Percent, 1980-1990



(Exhibit 2)

Census figures show that, from 1990 to 1997, births have exceeded deaths (defined as "natural increase"). Over the same period, more people have left the region than have come in, indicated as "net migration." Between 1980 and 1990, Niagara County lost 2.9 percent of its population. In the decade between 1980 appears that population increases have resulted from the internal movement of current residents than by any particular influx of new residents.

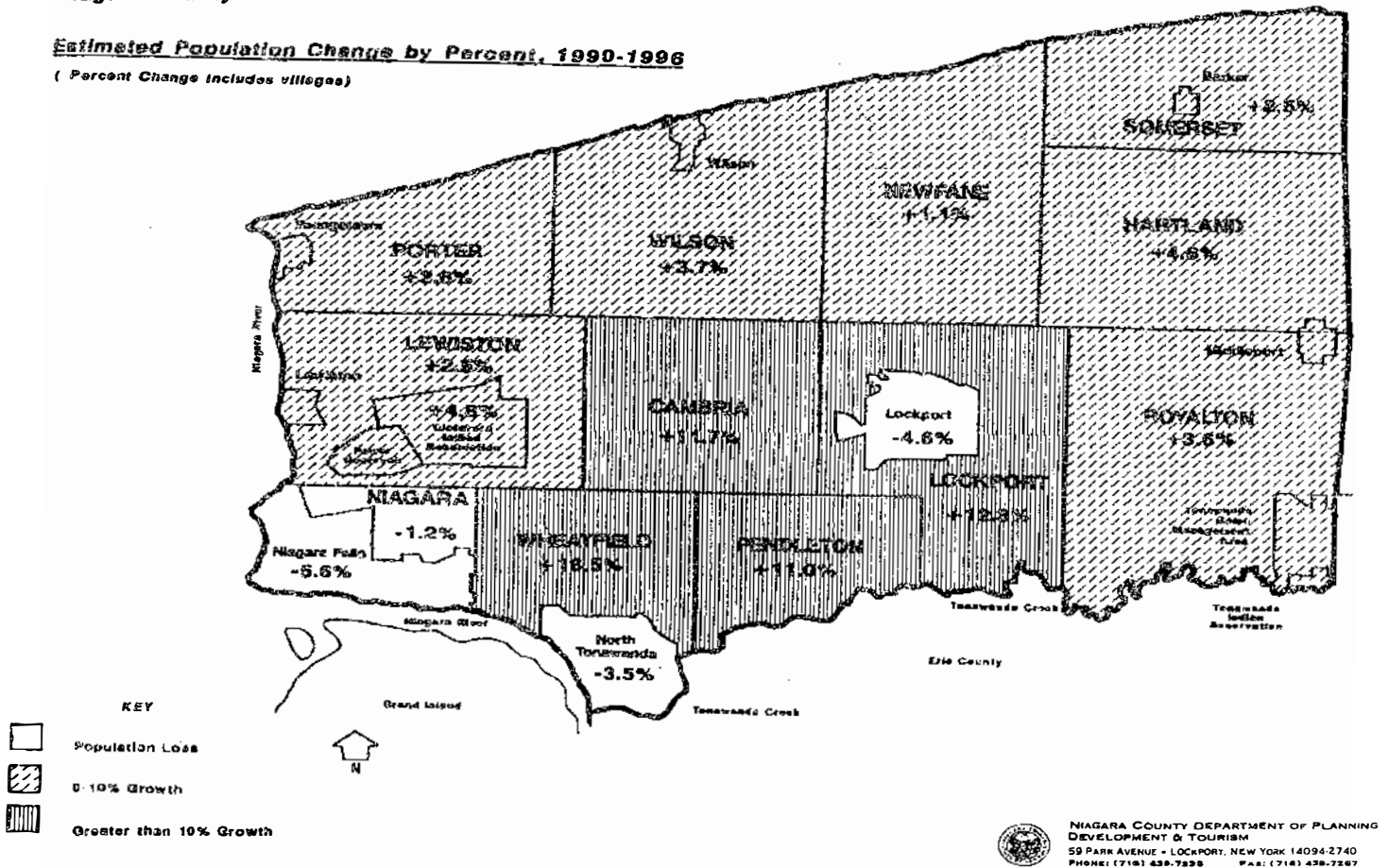
Based on estimates by Empire State Development, the period between 1990 and 1996 shows an overall increase of 463 persons, a negligible 0.21 percent change. The estimates also show communities in the central part of Niagara County experiencing the majority of population growth, while the surrounding towns are growing at more modest rates. These growth communities have benefited by their proximity to Erie County and relatively convenient access to the regional transportation network for travel to employment centers in Buffalo and Amherst.

Additionally, most communities in Niagara County are well served by roads, municipal water service and sanitary sewer districts which address the basic infrastructure needed support residential development. Even those areas outside of local and county sanitary sewer districts have continued to grow with homes being served by individual septic systems.

Niagara County

Estimated Population Change by Percent, 1990-1996

(Percent Change Includes villages)



(Exhibit 3)

URBAN VS RURAL

Niagara County is classified statistically as a metropolitan county with urban center populations over 50,000 and as part of the Buffalo Standard Metropolitan Area. With a stable population base that is spread across three major cities, twelve towns and five villages, Niagara County affords its residents the opportunity to choose from an urban, suburban or country lifestyle. Approximately 41 percent of the population live outside city and village limits. The cities of Lockport, Niagara Falls and North Tonawanda constitute the largest urban complexes in the County, while secondary population centers, associated with scattered industrial activity and local retail centers that serve the County's agricultural base, are found throughout the County.

Population growth is occurring mainly in the already urbanized areas, however, with notable increases occurring in the outlying rural agricultural areas. The communities that have consistently lost population are the central urbanized areas comprising of the Cities of Niagara Falls, Lockport and North Tonawanda. Most dramatic is the loss that has taken place in Niagara Falls, where a 1960 population of 102,394 has decreased to 61,840 in 1990. This trend of out-migration from city centers is consistent with the experiences of older industrialized urban areas throughout the United States.

The following chart summarizes population change and distribution between 1980 and 1990:

Table 10: Distribution of the population in 1980 and 1990:

Niagara County	1980	1990
Towns	86,060 (37.9%)	90,626 (41.1%)
Villages	9,306 (4.0%)	8,875 (4.0%)
Cities	131,988 (58.1%)	121,255 (54.9%)
TOTAL	227,354 (100%)	220,756 (100%)
Urban	163,261 (71.8%)	157,594 (71.4%)
Rural	64,093 (28.2%)	63,162 (28.6%)

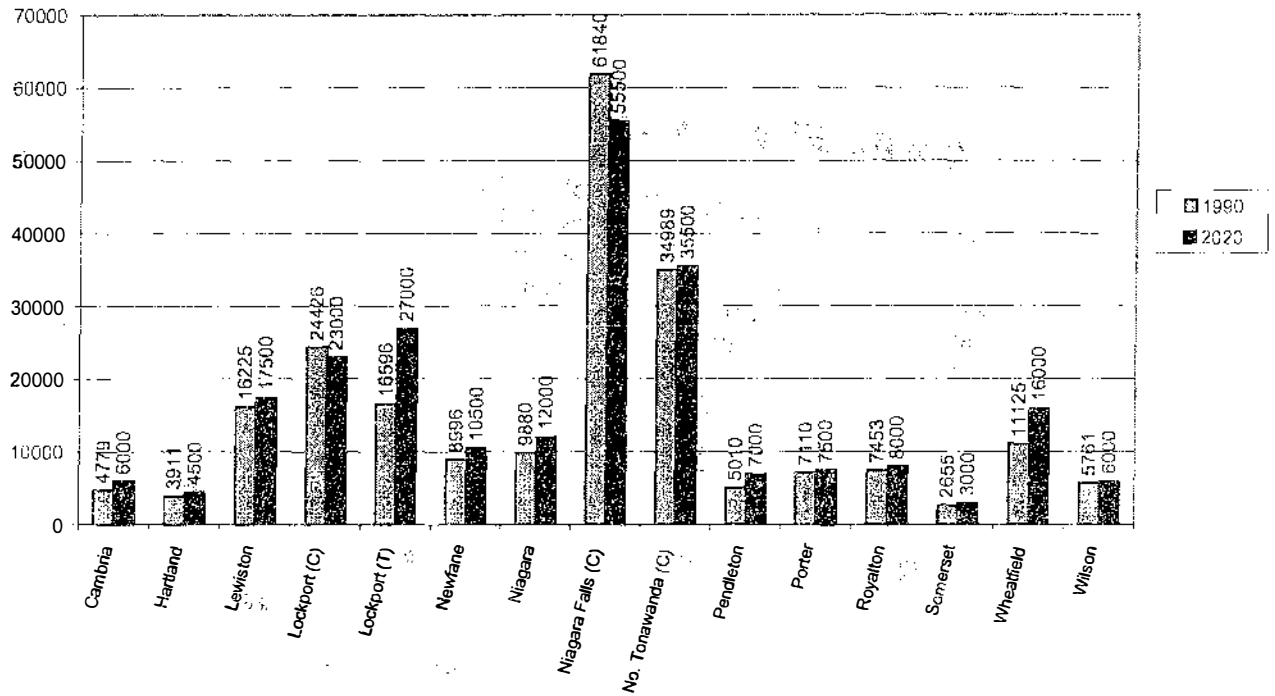
FUTURE POPULATION GROWTH

In 1997, population projections were prepared for the Greater Buffalo-Niagara Regional Transportation Council (GBNRTC, formerly the Niagara Frontier Transportation Committee) by URS Greiner Consultants, Inc. for communities in Erie and Niagara Counties. The selected forecast anticipates a year 2020 population of 239,000 for Niagara County, or an 8.3% increase over 1990 levels. According to the study, those municipalities expected to have the largest population increases are:

Niagara County Municipalities with Largest Projected Population Increases 1990 to 2020 (Table 11)	
Lockport (T)	62.7%
Wheatfield	43.8%
Pendleton	39.7%
Cambria	25.5%
Niagara	21.5%
Newfane	16.7%
Hartland	15.1%
Somerset	13.0%

**Source: Phase 2 Economic/Demographic Overview Study Final Report by UR Greiner Constultants, Inc..*

Niagara County Projected Population 1990 - 2020



(Table 12)

Should the trends of increasing suburban and rural population continue along with decentralization of population, more land area in the County will be utilized for residential development. This will most likely place increased development pressure on areas that are presently farmed and/or within Agricultural Districts. In many townships, the resultant effect will be decreased acreage in Agricultural Districts and land available for farming activities. Several communities in Niagara County have already acknowledged the emergence of agricultural land use issues during the completion of recent updates to their Comprehensive Plans. These communities have been considering provisions for Agriculture and Farmland Protection while permitting future growth to occur in desired locations.

C. HOUSING ACTIVITY

Even with a population reduction of nearly 7,000 persons between 1980 and 1990, the number of housing units in Niagara County actually increased from 85,209 to 90,385 over the same period. Many of these new housing units were built in the suburban and rural townships that continue to attract homebuyers both from within Niagara County and neighboring Erie County.

According to data compiled by the Niagara County Department of Planning, Development & Tourism, residential permits have increased from 1,553 permits issued in 1980 to over 4,000 permits issued annually during the 1990's.

RESIDENTIAL CONSTRUCTION PERMIT SUMMARY

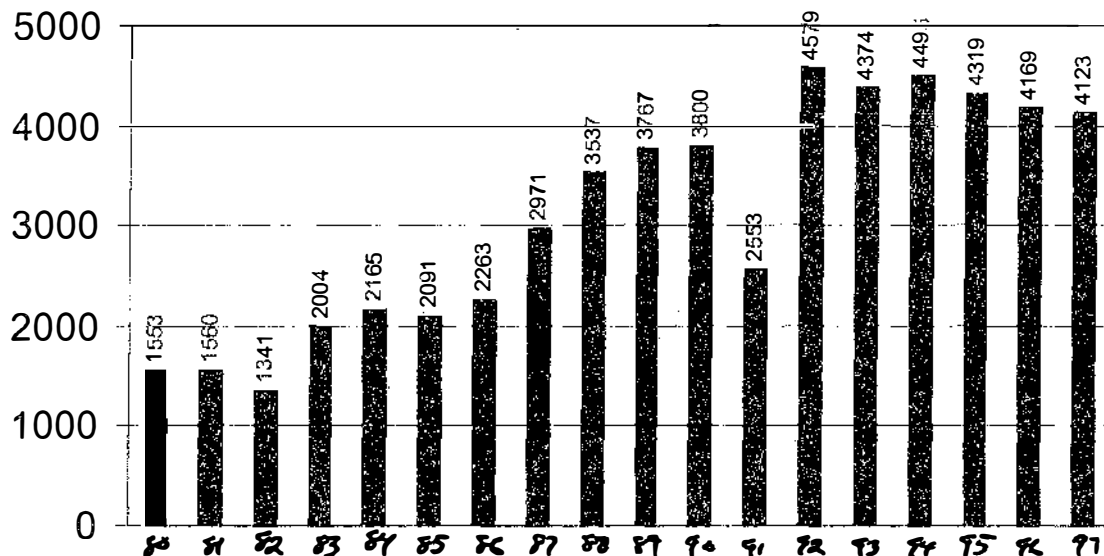
Annual County Totals 1985 - 1997 (Table 13)

YEAR	RESIDENTIAL PERMITS	RESIDENTIAL \$ TOTAL
1985	2091	29,018,093
1986	2263	43,445,570
1987	2971	55,203,444
1988	3537	75,604,161
1989	3767	99,377,385
1990	3800	82,693,861
1991	2553	65,941,559
1992	4579	87,669,953
1993	4374	96,804,982
1994	4495	93,135,911
1995	4319	78,765,460
1996	4169	79,611,070
1997	4123	57,021,470

URBAN AND RURAL HOUSING UNITS (Table 14)

Housing Units	
Urban	66,855
in urbanized areas	52,523
in other urban areas	14,332
Rural	23,530
Farm	578
Non-farm	22,952
Total Units	90,385

Residential Building Permit Activity in Niagara County



(Table 15)

D. INFRASTRUCTURE: UTILITIES & WATER

D.1. Wastewater Systems

The Niagara County Sewer District #1 was formed in July, 1971. Organized in response to the initiatives provided by New York State bond issues in 1966, the district was in position to apply for funding through the Clean Waters Act of 1972. The district has been a valuable tool for proper wastewater management for communities where soil profiles limit natural leaching of effluent and for many residents faced with high costs of creating leach fields of a standard to meet public health requirements. Six of the twelve Niagara County townships are wholly or partially within the sewer district. Separate systems service cities and villages.

The task of addressing sewer line extensions or even sewer district expansion relative to agricultural protection strategy is made more difficult because of the potential conflict of community goals. Niagara County Sewer District #1 was created before the first agricultural district in the county and as such, is not limited by the special benefits districts provisions of New York State's Agricultural Districts Law (Sect. 305 (5)). However, some costs associated with sewer line extension can be exempted for qualifying agricultural land if such exemptions are pursued. Notice of Intent provisions of the Agricultural District Law (Sect. 305 (4), require agricultural impacts be identified prior to construction of public sewer or water projects located within agricultural districts. Although these projects have been numerous in Niagara County, mitigation measures to date have been limited to construction standards and to lateral restrictions on some sewer projects. The Agricultural Districts Law has not prevented sewer and water lines from being built where town decision makers have responded to residential need.

Many landowners have paid non-user fees to the Sewer District for many years, but have no personal benefit of material service. Others build in areas where approvable leach field construction is very expensive. Speculators holding rural land actively seek sewer service to enhance the value of their holdings. Farmers, themselves, often prefer the enhanced non-farm development values associated with sewer and water access. Similarly, even widely scattered rural homeowners with inadequate wells successfully seek public water.

Household Sewage Disposal by Method, Niagara County (1997)
(Table 16)

Sewage Disposal	
Public Sewer	75078
Septic Tank or Cesspool	15120
Other Means	187

In rural areas of Niagara County, decision-makers should consider that recently, the United State Environmental Protection Agency concluded that decentralized cluster and individual wastewater treatment systems are feasible solutions for meeting public health and water quality goals. A biokenetic system is currently under consideration for Sunset Island in the Town of Wilson, Niagara County. Such systems are potentially cost-effective, environmentally sound tools for wastewater management in rural areas and may help to limit development pressure on farmland. Decentralized systems require more homeowner attention; arrangement of complex funding and gaining the acceptance of funding agencies, engineers and health departments for these low-tech, self-help solutions. The New York State Self-Help Support System is an innovative program for assistance to local governments, NYS Department of State, and NYS Department of Environmental Conservation and Health. It is part of the Northeastern Rural Community Assistance Program.²

(1) Rural Futures holiday issue, 1998, NYS Legislative Commission on Rural Resources, Albany, N.Y. p. 3

D.2. Water Supply Systems

Unlike many other areas of the country, Niagara County has an abundant supply of fresh water. The County is surrounded on three sides by fresh water; Tonawanda Creek on the south, the Niagara River on the west, and Lake Ontario to the north. The Niagara River, with an average flow of 204,000 cubic feet per second, is the source of most of the County's present needs. Another source is the area's bedrock aquifers, where wells produce yields averaging 50 gpm and as high as 2,000 gpm. A third source is the vast 393 cubic mile volume of Lake Ontario. The lake, which has depths up to 800 feet, is the 8th largest body of water in the Western Hemisphere.

Most residents obtain their water from municipal water systems. The County has a public water district that was the first of its kind in New York State. This district obtains water from the Niagara River and is connected with the municipal water systems for emergency service.

Many rural residents also depend on deep and shallow wells for their water. Most deep wells that are north of the Niagara Escarpment are dug into the red Queenston shale. The quantity and quality of the available water is erratic. In many places deep wells dug or drilled into the red shale produce water that has a high salt or sulfide content. The yield of water is often inadequate during extended dry periods. Deep wells south of the escarpment that are drilled into the Lockport limestone formation yield water that is generally high in bases, especially calcium, resulting in hard water. Water softeners are generally needed for the most efficient use of this water. The yield of water is generally much better from limestone than from shale. (Table 17)

SOURCE OF WATER	
Public System or Private Company	88231
Individual Well	1631
Drilled	489
Dug	489
Other Source	34

Abundant water services have permitted development to occur in all parts of the County, therefore, water service, except for major project needs is not necessarily a limiting factor in growth occurring throughout the county.

E. PREVIOUS AGRICULTURE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STUDY

The last major economic development study of Niagara County was completed in November 1986 by Arthur D. Little Inc. This study suggested opportunities for agricultural development were to diversify into high-value, high demand crops. The report suggested that this would slow the conversion to non-agricultural uses. They also suggested the maintenance and expansion of agricultural districts (Arthur D. Little, Inc., p. 11-16).

Strengths of Niagara County agriculture cited were a long, temperate growing season, rich soil, abundant water for irrigation, low farmland prices and economical farm sizes. Weaknesses identified were a fragmented market structure, Canadian competition and

trade restrictions. Additionally, drainage limitations to much of the land, encroachment of incompatible non-farm activity, competition for labor, lack of reinvestment in capital and real property taxes were identified (Arthur D. Little, Inc. pp. II-27 to II-19).

Among the four goals identified for economic development of agriculture were: strengthening the system for marketing fresh fruits and vegetables in major urban centers and retaining/expanding local fruit and vegetable processing operations and were suggested in support of Goal 2: "Increasing Employment Opportunities by Encouraging the Expansion of Key Economic Sectors of the County's Economy" (Arthur D. Little pp. III-14-III-15).

To "Strengthen the Competitive Position of the County's Business" (Goal 3), infrastructure improvements, such as improved drainage of certain farmlands; and road improvements, such as the Lockport Expressway (four lanes to Lockport), will help to lower trucking/distribution costs." These were suggested as programs associated with this goal.

To "Diversify the County's Economic Base" (Goal 4), Eastern Seaboard cities were mentioned and niche' market fulfillment implied in both the Northeast and Midwest (Arthur D. Little, Inc. pp.III-17 to III-18).

The Arthur D. Little Report contains an excellent summary of fresh fruit and vegetable marketing as an example of "Economic Development Projects and Programs" for agriculture (pp. IV-36 to IV-42). It is unfortunate that no true test of the marketing strategy (pp. V-123 to V-130) ever occurred. Cooperative Extension has directed its educational resources largely to production and technology for fruit growers and vegetable growers or individual farm enterprise analysis. The organization lacked staff to concentrate on leadership to make the recommendations of this report happen. No true "pulling together" by lay leadership has happened. Attitudes such as those reported in the Arthur D. Little, Inc. study (p.IV-40), still prevail. The smaller farmers often believe the larger farmers apply higher standards to that of the smaller farmer than their own and the larger farmer often resents having to "assist the competition."³

F. Summary of Existing Agricultural Tax Relief Programs and Provisions

By way of further background, a review of property tax relief is useful, especially if readers who are eligible were not aware of the availability of one or more provisions. Appreciation to the staff preparing the Dutchess County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan is expressed for the use of the summary appearing in their document.

Article 25 AA New York State Agriculture and Markets Law (AML): Agricultural Districts

New York's Agricultural Districts Law recognizes the importance of agriculture and the need to protect farmland for use in the production of farm products. The formation of geographic areas dedicated to protecting and promoting farming strengthens the position of agriculture in the community and helps keep farmers in business.

³ Arthur D. Little, Inc. Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy for Niagara County, Released November 1986, Cambridge, MA

Within Niagara County, 6 agricultural districts provide landowners:

1. Agricultural assessments
2. Limitations on state and local government authority to restrict farm practices or take farmland by eminent domain
3. Support by state agencies to encourage the retention of farming in regulations and procedures when advancing funds for non-farm development
4. Limitation on the power of involved municipalities in imposing special district taxes

The agricultural valuation mandated under the State's Agricultural Districts Program exempts taxes on assessments which exceed the agricultural value when a qualifying land owner applies for this.

Farms located both in and out of agricultural districts that are at least 10 acres in size and produce qualifying farm income of \$10,000 or more can qualify for the exemption. Operations with less than 10 acres that average gross sales of \$50,000 are also eligible. The State Board of Real Property Tax Services certifies the values used for computing agricultural values. The maximum ceiling value is set on a per-acre basis utilizing soil type and the income capitalization method of valuation.

Property owners who convert farmland that receives an agricultural valuation, to non-farm use are responsible for a roll-back payment designed to discourage this conversion.

An agricultural district by itself is not always effective in reducing farmland conversion to non-farm uses. However, it provides the farmers with some security that his/her "right-to-farm" is intact.

An additional provision of the Agricultural District Law requires sponsors of projects involving the acquisition of farmland for non-farm development within an agricultural district and involving public resources, demonstrate to the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets that all practicable steps to avoid or minimize any adverse impacts on agriculture will be taken.

The program also has provisions, adopted by Niagara County, that allow exemptions for commercial horse boarding operations.

The local option that allows agricultural value assessments to be used in calculating taxable farm value for *ad valorem* special districts has not been adopted by any town.

Real Property Tax Law (RPTL): Section 425: School Tax Relief (STAR)

This program provides real property tax relief to homeowners and additional relief to seniors through a school district reimbursement program. Since school district taxes account for approximately 60% of the overall property taxes, this program could result in significant savings, as the taxes on the farm homestead are often a large component of the farm tax bill. The basic relief is in the form of a \$30,000 property assessment reduction phased in \$10,000 increments, over a three-year period, that is given regardless of age or income. Enhanced school tax relief provides \$50,000 in exemption and is available to homeowners over 65 whose net earnings are less than \$65,000.

Fisher Forest RPTL: Section 480/480a

Under the provisions of AML Section 25AA, woodland - up to 50 acres per parcel - may be included as part of the farm under the agricultural valuation program. Beyond the

50-acre cut-off, a landowner may apply for tax relief under the Fisher Forest Act - Section 480-aRPTL, if the woodland qualifies for a forestry management plan.

Agricultural and Horticultural Buildings Program: Section RPTL 483

For a period of ten years, this program exempts from taxation increases in assessment due to the construction or reconstruction of agricultural and horticultural buildings, including those used for breeding and raising of horses. This includes structures used to process or merchandise agricultural products and structures used to house essential farm employees. Such structures must be situated on land (at least 5 acres) that is devoted to *bon fide* agricultural usage.

Agricultural Structures with Certain Limited uses: Section 483-a

The law exempts silos, farm grain storage bins, commodity sheds, bulk milk tanks and coolers, and manure storage and handling facilities from taxation. Farm owners should be encouraged to review their property record cards to learn how such property is being so treated.

Valuation of Agricultural Structures: Section 582

This section of the law views farm structures as specialties and directs assessors to assess agricultural structures according to the cost and depreciation schedules found in the New York State Assessors Manual, Volume 4. In addition, adjustments for loss of functional utility must be considered. Both farmers and assessors must be educated to understand the implications of this provision.

1996 New York State Farm Preservation Act: Agricultural Property Tax Credit Program

The 1996 Farm Preservation Act reduces the property-tax burden for farmers in counties with high land costs. If Total net income from all sources does not exceed \$150,000, farmers may be eligible for an income tax credit for school property taxes paid on farmland. The credit applies to taxes paid on farm acreage up to 250 acres.

The new law provides for farmers who derive two-thirds of their total household gross sales/income from agriculture, an income tax credit for all school taxes on the 250 acres of farmland and a 50 percent credit on additional farmland.

1997 Federal Tax Relief Act

It has become increasingly common for heirs to be forced to sell farms that have belonged to their families for generations, simply to pay the estate taxes due on the inherited property. Federal estate taxes can amount to as much as 55 percent of the value of inherited property. Since a farmers primary assets are typically land, structures and equipment, rather than cash, the necessity to produce a substantial cash payment can be hard.

The 1997 Federal Tax Relief Act offers substantial estate tax reduction for farmland that has been placed under a conservation easement.

Careful estate planning is an important component in ensuring the continuity of farm operations. Farm owners should be encouraged to take advantage of the expertise

available from land conservancies and farm support organizations. Easements are always voluntary and negotiated on an individual basis to meet the needs of the landowner to the greatest extent possible.

Credit for Rehabilitation of Historic Barns

An investment tax credit under Article 9-A and Article 22 of New York State Tax law allows a 25 percent tax credit for qualifying rehabilitation expense on certified historic barns or barns first placed into service before 1936.

Table 18

Property tax paid and estimated tax per acre for all NY counties, 1987 and 1992						
County	1987			1992		
	Property tax paid (\$1,000)	Owned land in farms (Acres)	Tax/acre (\$)	Property tax paid (\$1,000)	Owned land in farms (Acres)	Tax/acre (\$)
Albany	716	45,443	15.76	1,212	38,268	31.67
Allegany	1,637	154,206	10.62	1,841	132,711	13.87
Broome	1,224	96,447	12.69	1,557	79,965	19.47
Cattaraugus	2,445	186,081	13.14	2,653	163,635	16.21
Cayuga	2,929	189,184	15.48	3,734	177,280	21.06
Chautaugua	4,360	235,206	18.54	5,467	209,297	26.12
Chemung	662	51,688	12.81	777	47,113	16.49
Chenango	2,509	175,679	14.28	3,340	141,619	23.58
Clinton	1,514	141,517	10.70	1,848	128,793	14.35
Columbia	2,118	98,023	21.61	2,759	74,685	36.94
Cortland	1,545	112,073	13.79	2,034	103,390	19.67
Delaware	2,433	173,937	13.99	2,630	140,854	18.67
Dutchess	2,291	92,090	24.88	3,707	82,350	45.02
Eric	3,175	107,825	29.45	3,356	90,155	37.22
Essex	558	49,471	11.28	518	43,633	11.87
Franklin	1,435	137,818	10.41	1,884	119,297	15.79
Fulton	412	29,801	13.83	662	26,657	24.83
Genesee	1,909	115,853	16.48	2,444	103,055	23.72
Greene	605	44,050	13.73	951	33,022	28.80
Herkimer	2,084	144,019	14.47	2,350	131,440	17.88
Jefferson	3,023	282,543	10.70	3,087	244,605	12.62
Lewis	2,617	176,231	14.85	3,007	148,159	20.30
Livingston	2,428	160,058	15.17	2,762	132,460	20.85
Madison	2,649	167,458	15.82	3,276	144,700	22.64
Monroe	2,213	77,019	28.73	2,494	52,496	47.51
Montgomery	1,685	116,999	14.40	2,753	102,725	26.80
Niagara	1,869	85,907	21.76	2,432	75,436	32.24
Onieda	3,053	216,788	14.08	3,592	185,964	19.32
Onondaga	2,495	110,032	22.68	2,534	99,143	25.56
Ontario	2,384	130,097	18.32	2,916	112,150	26.00
Orange	2,657	68,908	38.56	3,699	57,775	64.02
Orleans	1,864	102,839	18.13	2,074	81,107	25.57
Oswego	1,489	94,194	15.81	1,843	87,188	21.14
Otsego	2,913	205,835	14.15	3,170	169,676	18.68
Rensseler	1,322	79,038	16.73	1,696	67,166	25.25
St Lawrence	3,618	382,633	9.46	3,891	330,267	11.78
Saratoga	1,040	61,539	16.90	1,262	51,668	24.43
Schenectady	385	18,986	20.28	408	16,076	25.38
Schoharie	1,375	97,452	14.11	1,753	84,846	20.66
Schuyler	992	56,066	17.69	1,142	48,632	23.48
Seneca	1,121	84,802	13.22	1,458	71,648	20.35
Steuben	3,184	315,934	10.08	4,177	284,872	14.66
Suffolk	2,742	23,406	117.15	3,383	17,823	189.81
Sullivan	840	45,004	18.67	1,322	36,702	36.02
Tioga	1,030	98,967	10.41	1,635	88,560	18.46
Tompkins	1,364	81,540	16.73	1,583	66,822	23.69
Ulster	2,292	61,402	37.33	2,446	53,809	45.46
Washington	2,607	175,554	14.85	3,199	145,846	21.93
Wayne	2,848	137,936	20.65	3,524	121,948	28.90
Wyoming	2,630	170,187	15.45	3,425	155,655	22.00
Yates	1,609	90,343	17.81	1,687	82,896	20.35
Total	101,865	6,377,284	15.97	124,566	5,500,435	22.65

Source: Census of Agriculture.

CHAPTER IV

NIAGARA COUNTY

AGRICULTURE STRATEGIC PLAN

“The mission of the Niagara County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board is to be proactive in strengthening a profitable farm economy which will protect land for future generations.”

A. NEW YORK STATE GUIDELINES FOR AGRICULTURAL AND FARMLAND PROTECTION PLANS

It is the intent of the State Agricultural and Farmland Protection Program to promote local initiatives for protection of agriculture and farmland following the guidelines of the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets.

Article 25AAA of New York State Agriculture and Markets Law requires:

- location of any land areas proposed to be protected
- analysis of the lands proposed to be protected as to the:
 1. value to the agricultural economy
 2. value as open space
 3. consequence of conversion pressure (change from agriculture to other use)
 4. the level of conversion pressure
- description of activities, programs and strategies intended to be used by the county to promote continued agricultural use

A.1. General location of agricultural areas to be protected

There is a general feeling within the Niagara County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board that, although other strategies are seen as more important, that the Board does want to be in position to apply for implementation funds at an appropriate time. Foresight can be more cost effective if purchase of development rights funds are offered before valued areas come under the degree of urban pressure and scarcity of, for example, the Town of Amherst in Erie County. Preservation efforts like these do little more than protect a little open space for a post-agricultural township. The Board remains uncertain that there will ever be enough funding to make a serious impact on agricultural land protection in Niagara County. However, it is acknowledged that as consciousness is raised by education and the visual change in the landscape, that there may indeed be interest in land protection in the future and that this plan should accommodate the acquisition of open space.

Specific locations of prioritized land for protection is not required by New York State Agriculture and Markets guidelines. However, criteria that would be used at such time as implementation funds are available are as follows:

1. Landowners must be willing to offer property development rights at a mutually acceptable price.
2. Land must be in an agricultural district.
3. When more land is available for protection than financial resources, those parcels with the highest percentage of prime farmland will be chosen first.
4. If and when a countywide Geographical Information System is in place, the County should pursue a land evaluation-site analysis study of land resources. An example of such a locally-developed plan can be found in Monroe County.

A.2. Analysis of values concerning these land areas

Information on the contribution of agriculture and the pressure under which the industry is operating is found in chapters one and two of this document.

Value to the agricultural economy Given the ranking of Niagara County agriculturally (22nd of 61 counties), the scarcity of prime farmland in New York State and the climatic advantages of the County in growing tender fruit, Niagara County has a resource worth protecting. The availability of a diversified and high quality local food supply should not be taken for granted as creeping urbanization occurs. Niagara County farms also supply residents with non-food horticultural and nursery crops, firewood, straw, animal feed, horses and wool.

Economic value Niagara County agriculture generates over \$57 million of sales annually through its 687 farms and additional dollars through agri-business multipliers. There is potential to expand economic activity in exports and in substitution of locally grown and processed food for imported products by direct-to-consumer sales, sales to institutions and food retailers.

Environment There is increased emphasis both voluntarily and by regulation on farm practices. Nutrient management, integrated crop management and pest management are making agriculture a good neighbor. Agriculture enhances bio-diversity and protects natural resources.

Open space As owners of 37.5% of the County land area, farmers are the purveyors of amenity value for all residents and many tourists who value rural landscapes. This stewardship role is not compensated by the non-farm sector of our society.

Quality of life Farming contributes to the balance suggested in the Cost of Community Services Study - sustainable communities, fresh food supplies and working landscapes. It provides open space without the input of public tax dollars.

Conversion pressure Updates to many town master plans seem to accommodate the widely available sewer and water services in place or projected. The access to infrastructure services anticipates real residential growth or redistribution of population as spatial and other quality of life needs are met with lower cost rural lots.

B. Farmland Protection Goals

The overall goal of the farmland protection strategy is to maintain a productive open landscape viable for future generations and which does not preclude more intensive

activity when the demand exists. Strengthening the underlying economics of agriculture to enhance profitability can not be assured by seeking a single, “magic bullet” that allows producers to escape the burden of free market competition. No single action will “save” Niagara County agriculture. The strategies which follow, offer concrete steps which can be taken to counter the trends of continuous loss of interest in agriculture by so many people. Niagara County and New York State have their comparative advantage in geographic location in the middle of a huge population concentration. Apparently, the paradigms under which many people are operating, are keeping this area from cultivating the market channels that bring so much imported food to New York State.

Understanding markets and coping with rapid change is not always possible for the small firm without staff to specialize accordingly. It is interesting to observe that the new Agricultural Systems Initiative proposed by Cornell University to the State Legislature contains marketing positions. Systems to bring buyers and sellers together and transfer skills to producers who often are only “price takers” on the wholesale market are needed.

Niagara County will probably continue to lose farmers. As stated above, intervention to counter a trend is necessary. The goal is to protect an industry – an industry with losers and winners. Strengthening agriculture so that people will want to farm is desired. In some cases, multigenerational farmers will leave farming while first time farmers will find their niche.

A careful look at both the revenue side of farm profitability and the cost side challenges everyone to look for economies of inputs. This is especially important in light of competition from developing nations which often have low input costs such as labor, a factor that can amount to as much as 60% of the cost of producing a commodity.

C. Recommendation of Strategies

Niagara County AFPB concludes that economically strengthening agricultural enterprises, increasing the level of public awareness about farming and gaining supportive local public policies provides the most effective and affordable means to achieve the goals of both state and local agriculture and farmland protection. Therefore, the Niagara County AFPB has built its Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan around these strategies:

A. Agricultural Economic Development

As “price takers,” like so many of the nation’s wholesale commodity producers, Niagara County farmers are vulnerable to the vagaries of the global food system. The requirements for successful farming consist of high quality land, access to capital, labor management and availability, and sophistication in marketing can be leveraged with cooperative-type efforts, product promotion and development of niches where Niagara County has a comparative advantage.

1. Establish an agricultural economic development coordinator

Multi-source funding for this individual would be a significant step. Such a person would provide for the availability of someone with a good portion of time to “circuit ride” with farmers and agri-business people. Cultivating cooperative-type activity, farm markets,

Industrial Development Agency business management and enhancement, among other tasks, and agri-tourism are key features of the plan.

In Jefferson County, New York, such a person promotes agriculture in the County, manages programs to attract new farmers and assists with a revolving loan fund that serves agricultural businesses and generally seeks ways to encourage value-added businesses to strengthen the County's agriculture. A job description for such a position in Wayne County is included in this document (Appendix B).

2. Strengthen the economic viability of farm businesses through programs on marketing, business planning, retention and expansion

To a certain extent resources are already available from Cornell Cooperative Extension farm management and production economics specialists (2 for 11 counties), but viable alternatives developed by the agriculture economic development coordinator need to be explored in a collaborative way. Exploration without undue risk to the farmer trying "alternative" enterprises such as, for example, organic grains is needed. Farm planning assistance, promotion and marketing assistance services, and entrepreneurial training are also needed. A few farmers and farm-related entrepreneurs have accessed the Small Business Development Center in the County but a coordinated system of technical assistance services needs to be available with mutual understanding by the organizations and "flow chart" procedure for handling leads provided by the agricultural economic development coordinator developed. Marketing should be taught to farmers. They should understand what consumers want. Cornell's Agriculture Systems Initiative, if funded, will provide high level management and marketing resources on a multi-county basis.

Petroleum experts maintain that sometime before 2010, world petroleum production will peak. Certainly one of the implications of this is that states like New York may someday have markets for grain corn that are stronger due to gasohol production. The New York Corn Growers Association wants to see development and educational agencies with the clout to effect regional development schemes in this region.

3. Continue to build on a "Buy Local" campaign with collaborative efforts from the New York Farms-funded Western New York logo, Niagara County grants and Resource Conservation and Development-derived grants.

Connections with the urban areas to find niches, even if outside the major food chains should be cultivated. State level promotional organizations are doing all they can with limited resources, but there are low cost and clever ways of utilizing computer web sites, farm tour maps and slogans to develop loyalty by Western New Yorkers for Western New York products. The Niagara County Department of Planning, Development and Tourism has a web site which might be linked with that of Cooperative Extension, farmers themselves and produce maps. A centralized computer operation would encourage local markets and restaurants to use local produce. An on-line database would provide daily access to information about the availability and local produce throughout the region. Buyer and seller links might be established for field crops such as hay and grain. Producers are free to develop their own web sites. A Coordinator would ensure more effective use of a site to organize production and distribution information for a wider range of local farm businesses, broaden the customer base, increase agri-tourism, and collect the economic data that is required for funding initiatives.

4. Continue to stimulate interest by the Niagara County Department of Planning Development and Tourism and the Niagara County Industrial Development

Agency in agricultural business retention and expansion. Set up a county revolving loan fund for farms.

The Niagara County Department of Planning, Development and Tourism has been active in seeking grants for various county needs. Other programs to be pursued might include: Rural Opportunities, Inc. Intermediary re-lending programs and the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (S.A.R.E.) grants. Without necessarily employing county-funded grants people, contractual grant seeking and writing similar to Genesee County could be productive.

Leadership needs to understand that there are many fine business managers in the farm community who are quite risk adverse, particularly when their cash flow is limited. We need to get beyond the barriers that prevent farmers from participating in innovative ventures if these well-meaning programs are to make a difference. Existing farm credit certainly is available for well-established businesses and those with strong credit histories. Because of the risk adversity of lending institutions and borrowers alike, such a fund needs to take the form of venture capital without unreasonable bureaucratic restrictions. However, irresponsible lending practices still must be avoided. Cooperative Extension and NY Farm Net can counsel farmers on the decisions they face about the future of their businesses.

5. Work towards a policy of having the Industrial Development Agency favor business development proposals that include a commitment to purchase local agricultural commodities and/or in some way support local agriculture

At this point it is not clear what freedom the IDA would have to place such restrictions on projects but this idea is seen as worth exploring by the AFPB and should be researched to its logical conclusion.

6. Encourage farm cooperatives

Multiple party economic development efforts are sometimes hindered because getting consensus from independent stakeholders is difficult and takes time. The word "cooperative" for a regulated commodity such as milk is a good word but failed cooperatives in some other commodities have made producers wary. Yet, in New England and elsewhere, cooperatives have been successful. The work of Drs. Bruce Anderson and Brian Henahan at Cornell University through their videoconference "Putting Cooperation to Work", suggests some working models. At the least, the AFPB should look for cooperative-type activity to encourage.

7. Develop a strong Eastern Niagara County Farmers Market

Clearly, the need must exist to parallel that of Niagara Falls and North Tonawanda before such a venture is undertaken. Such a venture might be perceived to compete with the many private market stands that exist but should be viewed as offering a "satellite opportunity" for existing strong markets and additional marketing opportunities for farm operations not in good locations for retailing. Labor cost control might be improved through consignment and contractual cooperative management. Cooperative Extension grounds in Wayne and Wyoming Counties are being used on a limited time basis for such efforts in their respective localities without being a threat to privately owned markets.

8. Support and promote local farm stands, u-pick operations and agri-tourism businesses – look for ways to capture the attention of thousands of travelers who cross Niagara County on the I-190

While there is nothing to prevent private-sector ventures of this nature, the intent here is to borrow ideas from the Canadians who have gotten visitors to leave the QEW Expressway to “stop and smell the roses.” A “Grown and Made in Niagara County” incubator-type facility might be built on some reasonably attractive location within sight of the I-190. Other items in this heading are covered in the content of this section.

9. Create a cooperative food-processing kitchen to develop value-added products. For development of more sophisticated products, link with the Food Venture Institute at the New York State Experiment Station at Geneva, New York (Appendix C)

New York State Health and Agriculture and Markets Departments regulations make the development of processed products a matter of concern because of food safety issues and labeling requirements. Such a facility provides the opportunity to produce and test a product. It offers small producers of specialty foods an opportunity to share production space and industrial kitchen facilities with other local entrepreneurs. The facility helps small businesses develop the “value-added” products that form the fastest-growing segment of regional food production. Examples of such facilities in Poughkeepsie, New York and The Adirondack Kitchen should be studied before endorsement of this idea.

10. Develop a County marketing packet for agriculture that extols the advantages of farming in Niagara County

Contents of such a packet, produced by the North Adirondack Ag Council include a factual brochure entitles “Northern Valley Region...The Place to Farm,” a handout with data on the growing season, lists of realtors and credit institutions, a list of tax incentives and Chamber of Commerce or “I Love New York – Franklin County” booklets. Advertisements in regional and national ag industry publications parallel other Chamber of Commerce-type activities. This may borrow from Niagara County's Market Facts brochure.

Farm Link is a national program that puts realtors with farmland listings in contact with a nationwide inventory of farmers looking for good agricultural land, climate, and access to markets. Support for this program would make it easier for farms that are for sale in Niagara County to be sold as working farms rather than converted to non-farm uses.

Farm Link is part of a multi-faceted economic development program in Dutchess County known as “Farm Again in Dutchess County.” Intriguing projects such as “BarnAgain,” “Passport to Agriculture – A Farm Visitation Program,” and “Crop art,” could have Niagara County-based parallels.

11. Cornell University's Agriculture Industry Development, Enhancement and Retention (AIDER) Program is a community-based program that first identifies the concerns and barriers to local firms' vitality via survey and then empowers teams to develop strategies to encourage their growth.

The program structure includes farm visits, immediate follow up, action planning and then an implementation phase to achieve identified goals. Because of the heavy use of volunteers and the cost, the AIDP is not recommending application for the funding at this time. It is possible to use the value of volunteer time in lieu of the County 20% match.

Even if the funding is not sought, the methodology might be borrowed to implement a lower-cost local process.

12. High utility rates continue to contribute to the high cost of doing business in New York State relative to competitors elsewhere in the United States. A detailed study of the cost of various farm inputs should be done to provide a factual basis for recommendations to the Public Service Commission and to governments at the State And local level about the impact of these costs on survival of farm and agricultural food processing

B. Recommendations for Education, Promotion and Public Relations

Various educational strategies for children, adults, consumers, farmers, local decision makers and special groups (i.e. Realtors) are needed. Understanding agriculture as a desirable land use and not the lowest use is a goal of the AFPB. Agriculture has important economic and environmental benefits and can be compatible with other land uses. Amenity value for all of society is a public benefit provided by private sector agriculture.

1. Develop a media campaign, literature (including informational booklets on Niagara County farms, farm stand brochures, farm tour maps, etc.) and signage designating Niagara County as an agricultural county Improve consumer awareness of farming and available produce.

A test of the effectiveness of this venture will be undertaken if the Niagara County Farm Bureau and the Niagara County Department of Planning, Development and Tourism are successful in a grant application that targets this very point. Depending upon their success additional projects should be sought. Use the media to advertise local produce. On the whole, Western New York media has been very good to the farm community. Thousands of dollars of free advertising are realized through the interest of the media in human interest stories from the farm. Cooperative advertising, that puts some money in the advertising income of newspapers, assures some well-timed publicity that may be rewarded with more news coverage of agriculture. Depending upon the capabilities of an agricultural economic development coordinator, a great deal can be done to put the "locally produced" logo and authentic product in front of the non-farm public right in Western New York. An attempt might be made at the county fair to feature a meal with ingredients to the maximum extent possible, grown locally.

- Supermarket chains vary in their interest in local produce and are not to be blamed when the sophisticated food system we have gives them little choice but to buy wherever quality products are available at a price that gives them a profit. Organizations, like Farm Bureau, could develop an award system for recognizing stores that buy locally based on acceptable improvement goals.
- Promote logos that have been or are being developed promoting regional and local produce. Find "fast-track" notification methods to tell tourists about peak blossom time with routes and travel loops for both local and distant visitors.
- Work with the Seaway Trail organization on regional cuisine and with restaurant chefs. The kinds of relationships that are developing in New York City in terms of loyalty to the City watershed farmers and environmental accountability is fascinating. While Western New York does not have the population base of New York City, a "circuit rider" economic development coordinator might lay out some groundwork for more producer-to-restaurant chef than is occurring. This activity could be picked up by the private

sector. Already, Cooperative Extension has been approached by a restaurant broker seeking people growing quail, mushrooms and other high value, but hard-to-find local products.

- Use National Ag Week, in October, to spotlight local agriculture. Keep the Chamber of Commerce-sponsored apple festival viable. Consider adding grapes with emphasis on Western New York wines, wine making contests, etc.
- Create a County Agricultural Information Internet Web Site (see A.3. above "Continue 'Buy Local...'). As the public becomes increasingly computer literate, familiarity with a truly useful local web site will be very helpful in educating the public.

2. Create a high level of awareness and knowledge by community decision makers, farmers and other county residents about economic and societal values of agriculture

As people today are increasingly removed from the generation when America was more agrarian, they do not understand what it takes to produce food, care for animals and generally make a living on farms. There is a different social mix in rural areas of rural non-farm people who don't understand normal farm practices. Understanding the food and fiber system of our country and our world ought to be on the list of required concepts learned in elementary schools and "adult education" must continually be furthered by the agricultural industry itself.

Parties responsible for this item are many and financial resources limited but at a minimum, Cornell Cooperative Extension and Farm Bureau ought to draw up an outline to provide learning opportunities in this area. One current activity is the farm tour for decision makers organized collaboratively by Niagara County Department of Planning, Development and Tourism; Farm Bureau of Niagara County and Cornell Cooperative Extension.

3. Support training and employment programs to help mentor young people who are attracted to farming but don't know how to get started. Have regular meetings with young farmers to encourage them and give them a full understanding of resources accessible to them.

The Cooperative Extension system has conducted Department of Economic Development (DED) grant programs to train milkers and herdsmen as well as other skilled farm labor often at some distance from Niagara County because getting class sizes to justify programs requires regionally central locations. Steps have been taken to provide training by centrally located specialists through the BOCES distance learning linkages to local schools. The DED grants subsidize course costs but where fee-based programs can be justified or where Private Industry Council-sourced funds can be justified, more of this training can be provided. A synergistic effect has been experienced with Cooperative Extension organized young farmer discussion groups. Leadership needs to be exercised if these are to be regular and quality of programs must be high. Develop Farm Match efforts, such as those pioneered by the New York FarmNet Program, to assist in connecting aspiring farmers to mentoring older farmers without heirs interested in the farm. Assist beginning farmers in finding resources for farm purchases.

4. Develop a coordinated public school program to educate youth about agriculture:

- Develop a list of farms offering farm tours to school groups and encourage farm field trips
- Develop a "Speakers Bureau" of farmers and other professionals available to give presentations at schools, local events and meetings of civic organizations. There are resource people in agriculture known for their speaking ability or their knowledge of agriculture. This item simply takes a more aggressive stance in publicizing a list of the better speakers with information on their expertise and expectations much the same as corporate speakers bureaus do. The list is made available to service and other community-based clubs.
- Work more aggressively to get "Agriculture in the Classroom" into the classroom! There are some problems, as crowded as the curriculum is, getting some schools to even buy into the teacher resource notebook as self help – infusing the materials into the existing curriculum. At least one local volunteer is well-received as she takes the program directly to students rather than doing teacher training workshops.
- Promote 4-H through Cooperative Extension and distance learning programs.
- Provide incentives for teachers doing agricultural education in the form of contests and prizes for children.

5. Educate non-farm neighbors about farming practices and ways to coexist with agriculture

- Hold educational farm tours so the public can see sound agricultural practices and understand the need for them.
- Create fact sheets for distribution at festivals, on tours, etc. to let the public learn about acceptable agricultural practices.
- Use build-out maps to educate the public about the cost of increased community services when farmland is developed.
- Continue decisionmakers' tour like those done in 1997 and 1998 and find ways to induce urban legislators to participate. Seek funds for a public tour or set up a drive-it-yourself tour.
- Work with tourism interests to promote awareness that agriculture is a major draw for tourists to the area. Capitalize on both the revenue-producing facilities and free points of interest and history that induce tourists to enjoy the country – staying long enough to look for bed-and-breakfast facilities and small town restaurants.

6. Provide education in the profession

- Cooperate with local colleges and schools in such diverse areas as computer education, conversational foreign language (for Spanish-speaking foreign workers), retail business planning and distance learning facilities (BOCES and public high schools) to bring specialists into more frequent contact with farmers. Because of the reduction in number of farmers and the greater need for specialization in helping them, it is necessary to bring farmers together from multiple counties. While many of them travel many miles now for quality in-service education, use of fiber optic distance learning technology will make education even more accessible.

Work with Extension specialists and the private sector on education in estate and land-use planning. Because these topics are of a rather personal nature, individuals often do not seek outside help with intergenerational transfer problems or when they do, it is too late to take advantage of estate transfer laws. Often, the "older" generation has rather old fashioned ideas about the next generation making it for themselves and the result is the loss of viable farm from agriculture.

- Work with lawyers and landowners to understand the role of land trusts as a strong way of preserving the intentions in a will to conserve the farm and open space.
- Provide workshop and mediation program to help farmers resolve conflicts with neighbors.

7. Work with the media to present an accurate image of agriculture

- Provide educational farm tours for the media, decision makers and the general public. Decision-makers tours, such as the one carried out in the past two years need to be continued. The huge Erie County tour (800 people +/-) may not be possible in Niagara County because of its size but various efforts for a drive-it-yourself or a "farm comes to the city" type activity might reach out to the public more than has been done so far. Such events provide facts and human-interest stories for the media.
- Establish a photo library of farm activities and scenic landscapes for the media. Give media story leads, both human interest and commercial with well-written press releases. Encourage writing within the farm community.

8. Encourage Realtors and Cooperative Extension to educate new home owners on rural living. Conduct assessors' schools in farmland assessment.

Create an agricultural education program for Realtors and present it through real estate boards. Understanding the value of an asset on a working farm relative to its income-producing potential will benefit farmers. It can be beneficial in helping prospective buyers to enter into their decision with some common sense about their expectations. Cooperative Extension also has many underutilized resources in rural living – and could provide an "orientation to the country" type adult education course.

C. Recommendations for Government Policies and Farmland Protection Strategies

A better understanding of the place of agriculture in townships is needed. All towns should have their own cost of community services study. Even towns with healthy revenues need to consider the implications of further scattered development, the infrastructure to service this development and the bearer of the costs of the development. Taxpayers reach into the same pocket to pay school taxes as the one that pays for county and town services. Innovative planning techniques contributing to wise land use should be understood.

The Niagara County AFPB is aware that legislation statewide and nationally is providing funding for the purchase of development rights and conservation easements where plans reflect prioritized agricultural areas. The Board views other strategies as more effective and less expensive than this strategy. Where farming is sufficiently profitable, loyalty to the land is much easier to retain. However, the Board does see merit in modeling for the future the value of purchase of development rights and tax deductible donations of conservation easements. A prioritization system is suggested that would qualify the County or townships to apply for farmland preservation funding at an appropriate time. Land use controls to preserve farmland will not provide an effective mechanism to maintain a farmland base nor force an industry to exist that is not economically viable.

1. Provide a supportive climate for agriculture through education of local

government officials for the continuation of farming through public policies and actions on land use and taxation that minimizes disincentives to farm and establishes a level playing field within the region.

Farmland and building assessment seminars, farmland protection seminars, analysis of regulations that put Niagara County farmers at a disadvantage with those in other counties and parts of the country – all can be educational to farmer and non-farm decision maker alike.

2. Provide for Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board review of town comprehensive plans prior to formal adoption.

The Board will consider build-out analysis of the plan's projected growth and zoning, to consider how it will impact existing agricultural areas and property taxes. Greenprints should be developed locally to supplement existing master plans.

3. Allow for creative development plans (PUDs—Planned Unit Developments) which economize on the amount of land used for buildings, which leave land open for future agricultural uses.

Provide land planning assistance for farm-friendly subdivisions.

4. Study means of treating equitably, farmers who are discouraged about the future of farming for their family.

They often favor spreading infrastructure to enhance the value of their land and to strengthen their retirement. Transfer and purchase of development rights is a relatively undeveloped concept in Western New York. Yet, local governments which are seeing serious pressures on their budgets as the town residential sector grows without a complementary growth in the industrial/commercial sector, should be seeking the most advanced research in how to direct growth with a win-win answer to landowners, developers and the government itself. If open space and agriculture are to be encouraged as an amenity value for a community, a workable methodology must be designed to direct growth without significant adverse impact on agricultural land.

5. Encourage in-fill on vacant parcels with existing infrastructure prior to extending municipal services and developing farmland.

Actively support brownfield utilization efforts such as the Niagara County and City of Niagara Falls Brownfields Pilot Projects.

6. Conduct farmland protection workshops to educate elected local and appointed officials about protection methods and feasible alternatives in the state and region.

7. Pass right-to-farm laws in all townships and the County (Appendix E).

Recognizing that this more of a philosophical statement of support, such laws must be worded so as to be supportive while recognizing non-farmer rights to coexist.

8. Criteria should be established to evaluate priority lands and easements to be secured when implementation funds are available for purchase of development rights or conservation easements.

These criteria would take into consideration, the criteria in Article 25 AAA of New York State Agriculture and Markets Law.. From the AFPB's perspective, they should also consider General Location of Agricultural Areas to be Protected from this chapter. Localized agricultural protection strategies should be developed on a town-by-town basis with county assistance.

9. Increase the quality/diversity of wildlife habitat.

Utilizing and encourage participation in United States Department of Agriculture incentive programs and programs of the Western New York Land Conservancy such as: Wetland mitigation, Wetland Reserve Program (WRP), Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP), Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), Forestry Incentive Programs (FIP), Stewardship Incentive Program (SIP) and various grant and other assistance programs of the Niagara County Soil and Water Conservation District.

10.A land evaluation-site analysis (LESA) project should be explored after Geographic Information System tools are available. Study of other New York counties with such analyses can give the County the benefit of their experience, mistakes and successes.

11.Gather information on revolving loan programs from counties with successes in this area and consider instituting the programs in Niagara County.

D. IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM

Recommendations of the Niagara County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan have been described. The following section outlines the specific recommendations and potential organizations involved in the implementation of the plan strategies. This prioritization and identification of involved agencies was developed by the Working Group with subsequent modification by the AFPB. High priority items indicate those which should be implemented in a relatively short period of time, preferably within 1 to 2 years, while Medium Priority programs should be implemented within 3 to 5 years. Low priority items may take more than 5 years to implement.

AGRICULTURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT	PRIORITY	POTENTIAL INVOLVED AGENCIES *
Create a position of agricultural economic development coordinator	High	NCFB, CCE, AFPB
Strengthen the economic viability of farm businesses through programs on marketing, business planning, retention and expansion	High	NCIDA, NCPDT, CCE, NCBusiness Alliance, Chambers of Commerce and NCSBDC
Continue to build on a "Buy Local" campaign with collaborative efforts from the New York Farms-funded Western New York logo, Niagara County Environmental Fund grants and Resource Conservation and Development-derived grants Continue to stimulate interest by the Niagara County Department of Planning, Development and Tourism and the Niagara County Industrial Development Agency in agricultural business retention and expansion	High	CCE, NCFB, Chambers of Commerce, RC&D
Work towards a policy of having the Industrial Development Agency favor business development proposals that include a commitment to purchase local agricultural commodities and/or in some way support local agriculture	Medium	IDA, NCFB
Encourage farming cooperatives	Low	NCFB
Develop a strong Eastern Niagara County Farmer's Market	Medium	NCFB, RC&D
Support and promote local farm stands, u-pick operations and agri-tourism businesses-look for ways to capture the attention of the thousands of travelers who cross Niagara County on the I-190	Medium	Chambers of Commerce, Farm Bureau
Create a cooperative food processing kitchen for value added products. For more sophisticated products, link with the Food Venture Institute of the New York Experiment Station at Geneva, New York	Low	Food Venture Institute, NCIDA
Develop a county marketing packet for agriculture that extols the advantages of farming in Niagara County	High	NCPDT, CCE, NCFB, Chambers of Commerce
Cornell University's Agriculture Industry Development, Enhancement and Retention Program is a community-based program that first identifies the concerns and barriers to local firms' vitality via survey and then empowers local teams to develop strategies to encourage their growth. Implement local process	Medium	NCFB, CCE, NCPDT
Study utility rate impact on agriculture	High	CCE

*Footnote on page 58

EDUCATION, PROMOTION AND PUBLIC RELATIONS	PRIORITY	POTENTIAL INVOLVED AGENCIES
Develop media campaign, literature and signage promoting Niagara County and local farms and markets	High	CCE, NCPDT - Tourism, Chambers of Commerce
Create a high level of awareness and knowledge by community decision makers, farmers and residents about the economic and social values of agriculture	High	CCE, NCPDT, Chambers of Commerce, Local Municipalities
Support training and employment programs to help mentor young people who are attracted to farming but don't know how to get started. Have regular meetings with young farmers to encourage them and give them a full understanding of resources accessible to them.	Medium	CCE, Chambers of Commerce, NCE&T, FarmNet
Develop a coordinated public school program to educate young people about agriculture	Medium	CCE, NCFB
Educate non-farmers about farming practices and ways to coexist with agriculture.	High	CCE, NCFB, Chambers of Commerce
Provide education to the profession	High	CCE, NCCC
Work with the media to present an accurate image of agriculture	High	NCFB, CCE
Encourage Realtors and CCE to educate selves and new home owners	High	NCDRPTS, CCE

GOVERNMENT POLICIES	PRIORITY	POTENTIAL INVOLVED AGENCIES
Provide a supportive climate for agriculture through education of local government officials about policies and actions on land use and taxation that reduces disincentives to farm	High	CCE, NCPDT
Provide for Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board review of Town Comprehensive Plans prior to adoption	High	CCE, NCPDT
Allow creative development planning (i.e. PUD's) which economize the amount of land used and provides open land for agriculture	Medium	NCPDT
Study means of treating equitably, farmers who wish to leave farming and still retain farmland	Medium	NCPDT, Local Municipalities, WNYLC
Encourage in-fill development of existing areas	Medium	NCPDT
Conduct farmland protection workshops	High	CCE, NCPDT, WNYLC, NCFB
Pass right-to-farm laws in all townships and the County	High	Municipalities, NCFB
Establish criteria to evaluate priority lands and easements for agricultural protection if implementation funds are pursued	Medium	NCPDT, NCFB
Increase the quality/diversity of wildlife habitat	Medium	Federal agencies, State agencies, NCEMC NCSWCD
LESA project	Low	NCPDT, CCE
Revolving loan fund	Medium	NCIDA

NCFB- Niagara County Farm Bureau
CCE- Cornell Cooperative Extension of Niagara County
NCPDT- Niagara County Planning, Development & Tourism
NCIDA- Niagara County Industrial Development
Agency
WNYLC- Western New York Land Conservancy
NCCC - Niagara County Community College
NCDRPTS - Niagara County Department of Real
Property Tax Services
NCEMC - Niagara County Environmental
Management Council
NCSWCD – Niagara County Soil and Water
Conservation District

CHAPTER V

LIST OF RESOURCES

- **Niagara County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board**
George Staples – Chairman
7329 West Somerset Road
Appleton, NY 14008
Phone: 716-795-3732
- **Niagara County Farm Bureau**
8999 Ridge Road
Gasport, NY 14105
Phone: 716-735-7791
- **Cornell Cooperative Extension, Niagara County**
4487 Lake Ave.
Lockport, NY 14094
Phone: 716-433-2651
- **Niagara County Legislature**
Court House
Lockport, NY 14094
Phone: 716-439-7002
- **Niagara County Department of Planning, Development and Tourism**
59 Park Avenue
Lockport, NY 14094
Phone: 716-439-9235
- **Niagara County Industrial Development Agency**
2055 Niagara Falls Boulevard
Niagara Falls, NY 14303
Phone: 716-298-8050
- **Eastern Niagara Chamber of Commerce**
151 West Genesee
Lockport, NY 14094
Phone: 716-433-3828
- **Niagara Falls Area Chamber of Commerce**
Carborundum Center
Niagara Fall, NY 14303
- **Chamber of Commerce of the Tonawandas**
20 Main St.
Tonawanda, NY 14150
Phone: 716-692-5120
- **Niagara County Soil and Water Conservation District**
4487 Lake Avenue
Lockport, New York 14094
Phone: 716-434-4949
- **Lake Plains Resource, Conservation and Development (USDA)**
446 West Avenue
Albion, NY 14411
Phone: 716-589-7709
- **Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA)**
4487 Lake Avenue
Lockport, NY 14094
Phone: 716-434-4949
- **Farm Service Agency (USDA)**
4487 Lake Avenue
Lockport, NY 14094
Phone: 716-434-6703
- **Western New York Land Conservancy**
21 South Grove Street
E. Aurora, NY 14052
Phone: 716-687-1225
- **Farm Credit of Western New York**
3080 W. Main Street
Batavia, NY 14020
Phone: 1-800-929-1350

REFERENCES

Arthur D. Little, Inc. Comprehensive Economic Development Study for Niagara County

Economic/Demographic Overview Study, Final Report by UK Greiner Consultants, Inc.

Essex County Agriculture Current Status and Strategic Plan, prepared by Yellow Wood Associates, Inc. Feb. 3, 1997

Facts About Niagara County in Fabulous Western New York, Niagara County Industrial Development Agency, December 1966.

Lehman, Paul E., A Survey of the Values and Beliefs About Land Use in the Town of Cambria and Somerset, Niagara County, NY 1995 (unpublished masters project SUNY-Buffalo p. 78

Overall Economic Development Program, Annual Update, Dec. 1998, Niagara County Department of Planning Development & Tourism

Regionalism: From Agenda to Action, Conference Proceedings Sprawl, A forum on Issues and Approaches in Western New York, Wednesday, Oct. 7, 1998.

Rural Futures, Holiday issue, 1998, NYS Legislative Commission, Rural Resources, Albany, N.Y.

Saving American Farmland: What Works, The American Farmland Trust

Ann Sorenson, Richard P. Greene and Karen Russ, Farming on the Edge, The American Farmland Trust, March 1997

Staley, Sam Pro and Con: the Sprawling of America, website: Intellectual Capital.com, Feb. 25, 1999

Study: NCCC Has Best Economic Impact by Eugena Sherman, Niagara Gazette, November 30, 1995

U.S. Census of Agriculture, 1974-1998

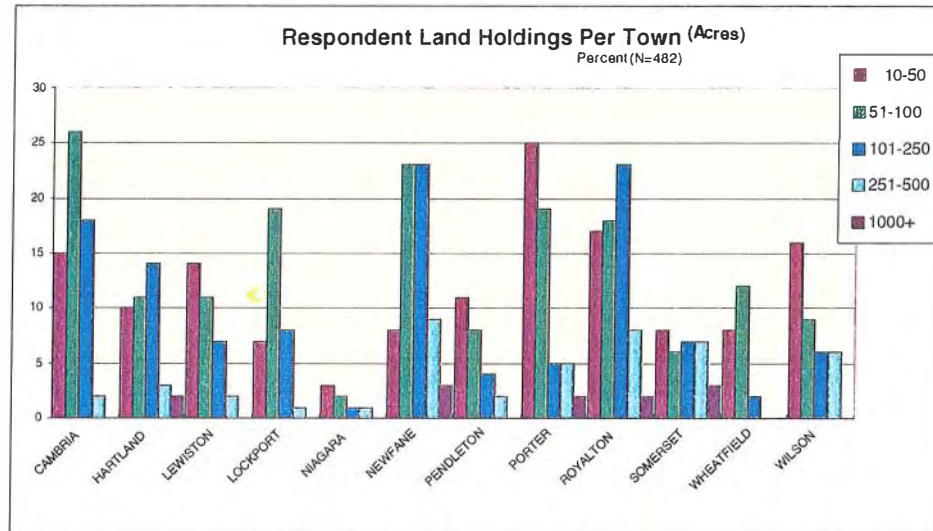
Visitor Profile Study, D.K. Shiflet & Associates, Ltd.

APPENDICES

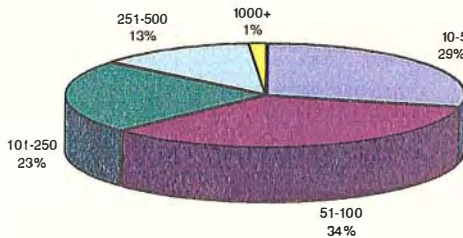
Farmland Owner Survey

This survey was mailed to 1,688 farmers and farmland owners in Niagara County to study attitudes and perceptions concerning farmland protection policy. It was decided by the Agricultural Farmland Protection Board to utilize the Niagara County Office of Real Property Tax Services records "Swiss code" identifier for property class 100: agricultural farmland or dairy, and property class 322: rural lots of 10 acres or more. Of the number mailed, 431 completed surveys were returned of which 429 were useful. This resulted in a return rate of 25 percent. The responses* will form the basis for the development of an Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan for Niagara County.

Location of your rural land holdings: In what town(s) is your rural property/ies located.

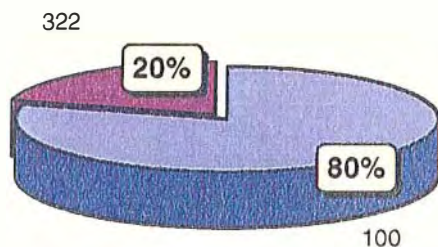


Average Size of Respondent Land Holdings (acres)
Percent (N=482)



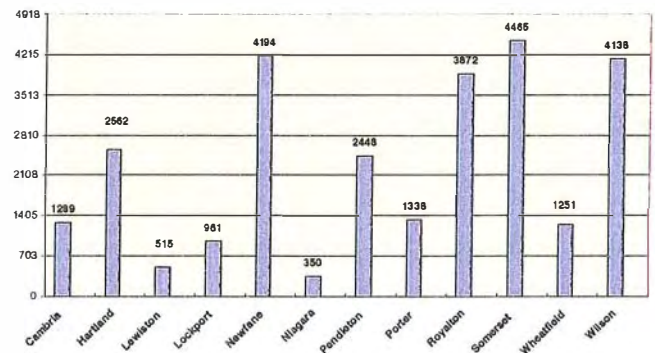
What range best describes the amount of your land holdings?

Property Class 100 vs. 322
Percent (N=422)



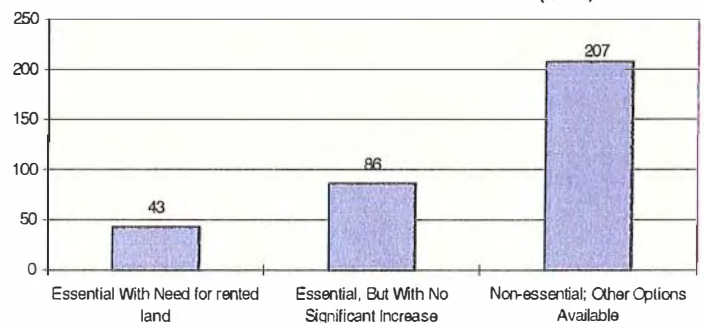
Respondents in property class 322: rural lots of 10 acres or more, compared with the number of respondents in property class 100: agricultural farmland or dairy.

Rented Farmland by Town (acres)



This graph represents the number of acres in the various towns that are rented to farmers.

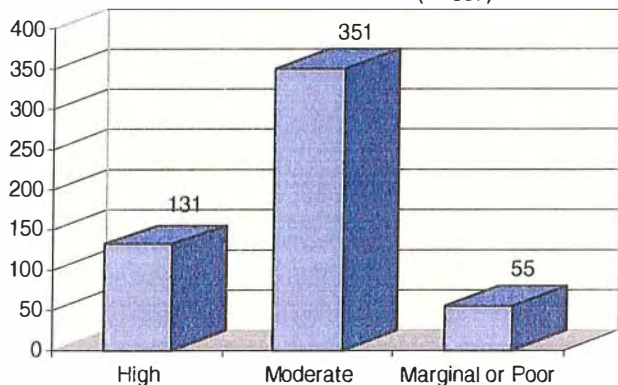
Significance of Rented Land to Farm Operations
(N=336)



How significant is the availability of rented land (farmland rented from non-farmers) to the success of your commercial farm operation?

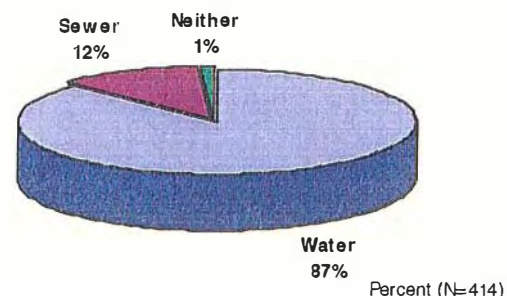
Agricultural Soils

(N=537)



Do you consider that your farmland soils are mostly: high quality, moderate quality or marginal or poor quality?

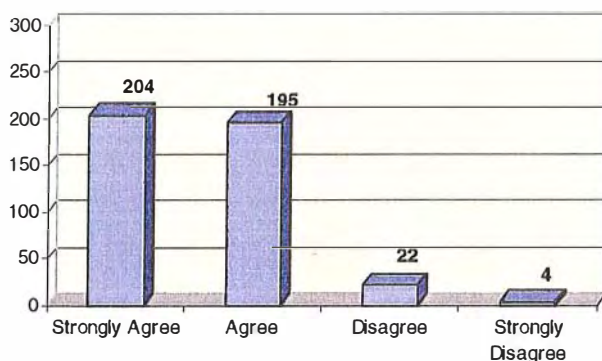
Is Water or Sewer Available to Service Your Property?



Which of the following public utilities are available to service your property?

Farm Taxes Paid vs. Services Received

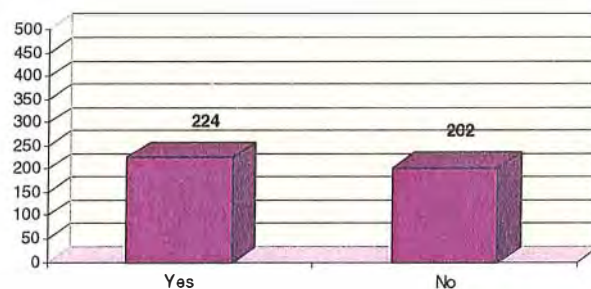
(N=425)



Agriculture/farm operations pay more local taxes than they receive in local services. Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree.

Agricultural Assessments

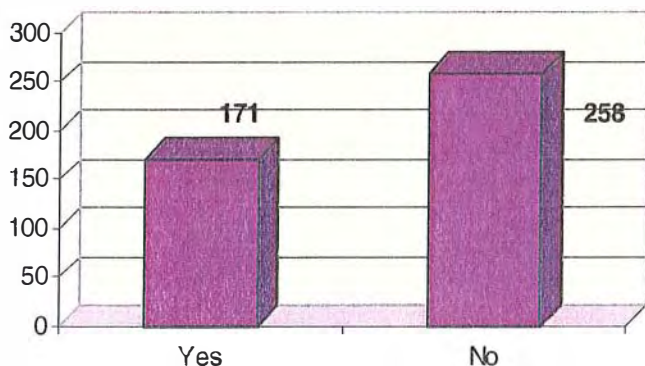
(N=426)



Are you getting an Agricultural Assessment (tax exemption) on lands, which you own?

Would Sell for Greater Value Per Acre

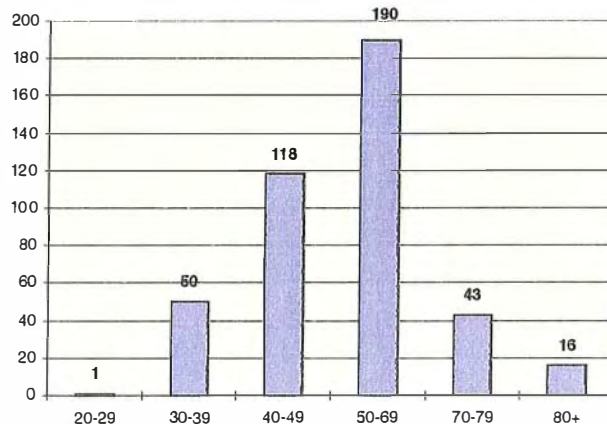
(N=429)



If I could sell my farmland tomorrow for more than its value per acre for agricultural use, I would definitely sell. Yes, No.

Age of Respondents

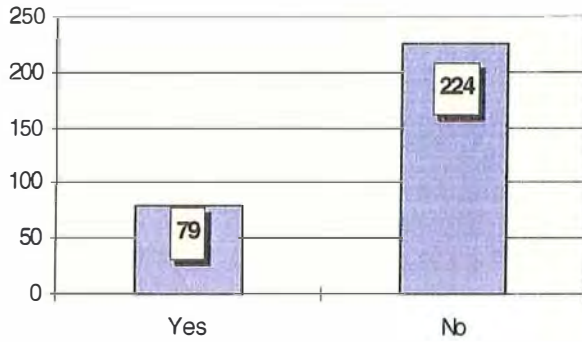
(N=418)



What is your age?

Farmers Retiring in Next 5 Years

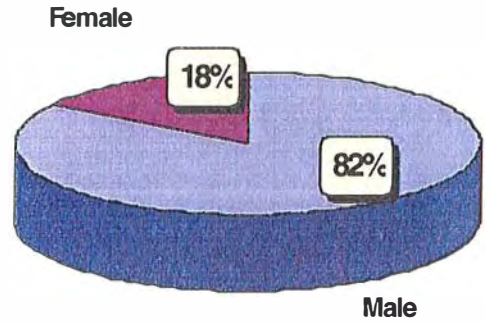
(N=303)



If you farm, are you considering retiring in the next five years?

Gender of Respondents

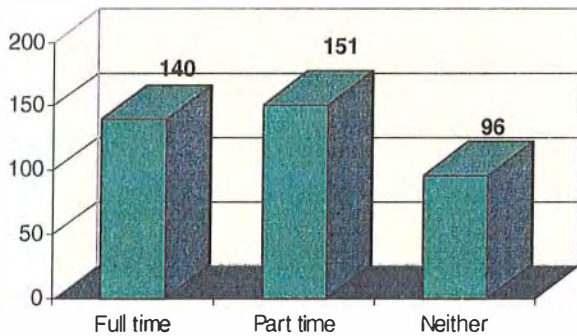
Percent (N=408)



What is your gender?

Farming: Full, Part-time, Neither

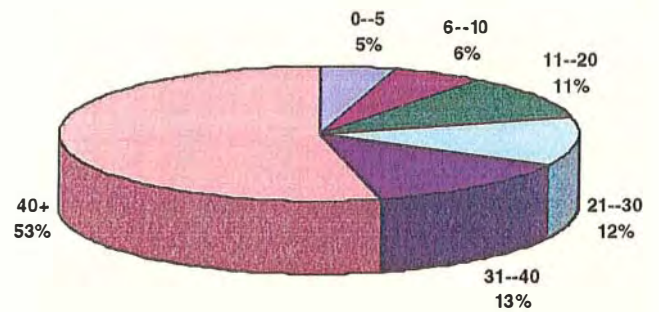
(N=387)



Are you a full-time farmer; part-time farmer; neither?

Years of Farming in Niagara County

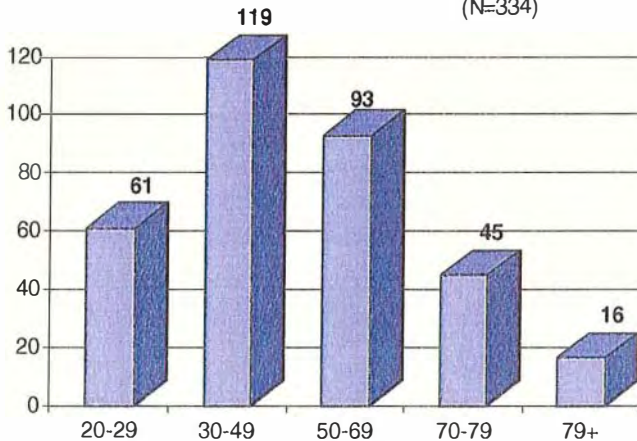
N=323



If your family operates a farm in Niagara County, for how many years?

Age of Principal Farm Operator

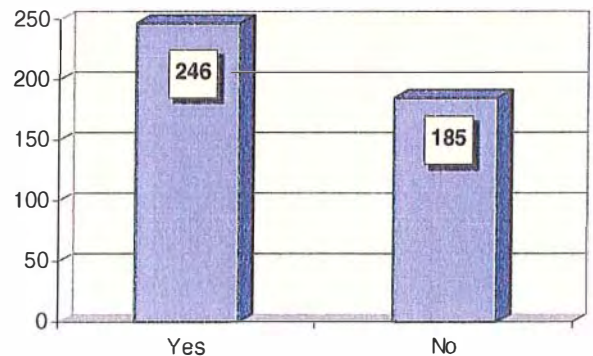
(N=334)



Age of principal farm operator?

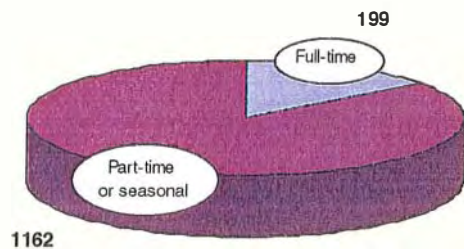
10+ Acres With Sales exceeding \$10,000

(N=431)



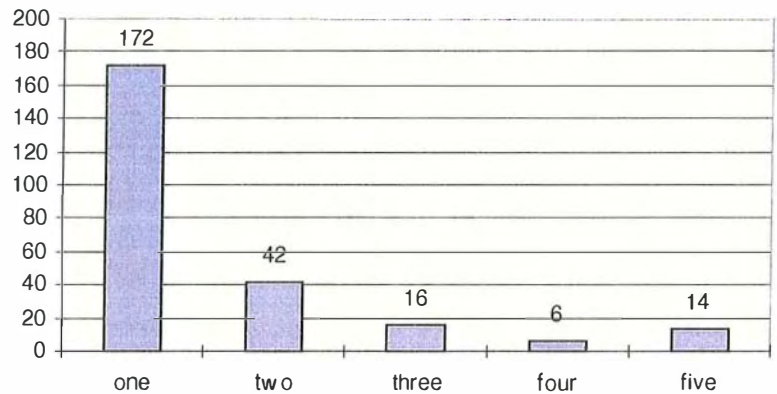
Do you own more than 10 acres of land committed to a full-time or part-time commercial farm operation, with sales of agricultural products exceeding \$10,000 per year?

Full Time Help Vs. Seasonal
(Total workers reported)



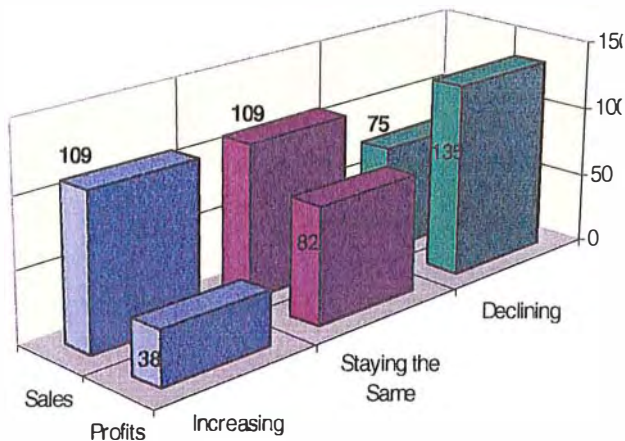
If you do use hired help on your farm, how many are employed full-time and how many are employed part-time or seasonal?

Households Receiving Income From the Farm
(N=250)



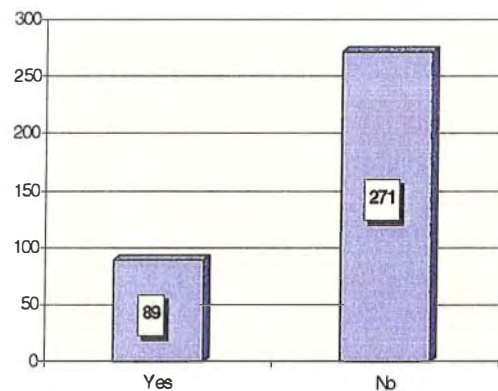
How many households receive income from the farm?

Sales and Profits over Past Five Years
(N=548)



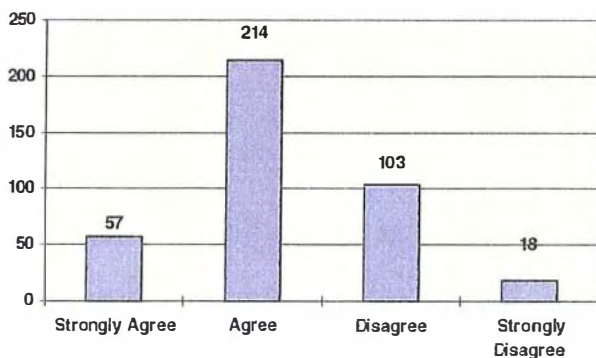
Over the past five years how have your sales and profits changed? (check whatever applies).

Enough Economic Development Incentives for Agribusiness?
(N=360)



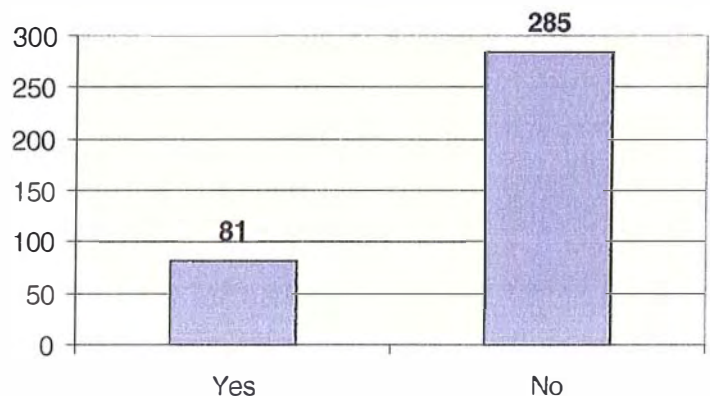
Are there enough economic development incentives for agribusiness to expand in Niagara County?

Agritourism Could Help Promote Farming?
(N=392)



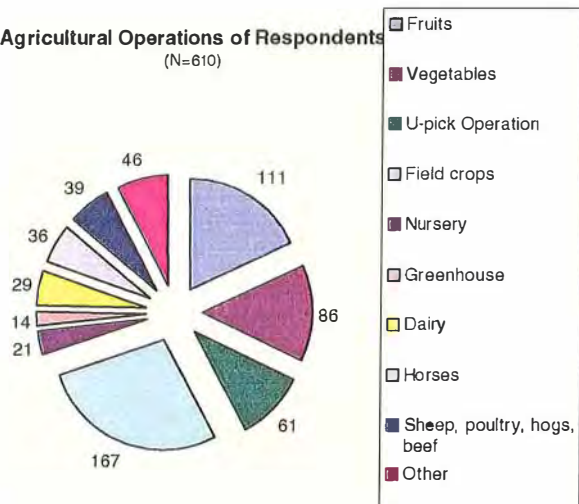
Agri-tourism could help promote the economic vitality of farming in Niagara County. Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree (Agri-tourism is tourist-related activities centered on farm and/or rural experiences, such as farm tours, farm bed & breakfasts, etc).

Neighbor Complaints About Your Farm Practices (N=366)



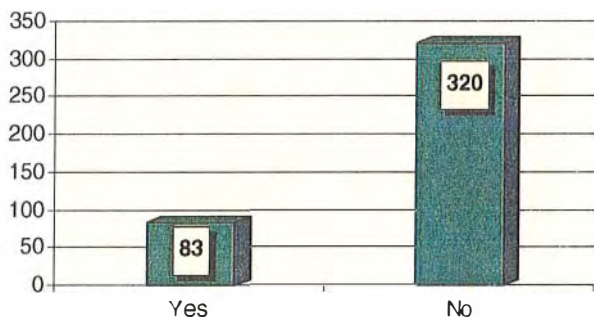
Have you had complaints from neighbors about your farm practices?

Agricultural Operations of Respondents
(N=610)



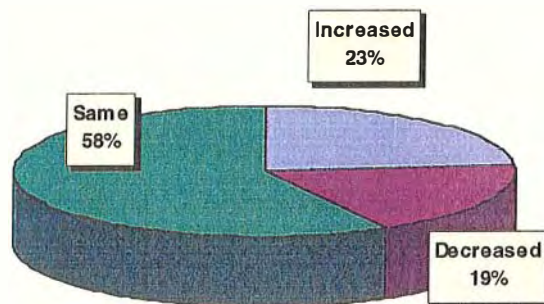
Which of the following agricultural operations describes what you own and/or operate? Please circle all that apply.

Sold Farmland in County in Past Five Years?
(N=403)



Have you sold farmland in Niagara County in the past five years?

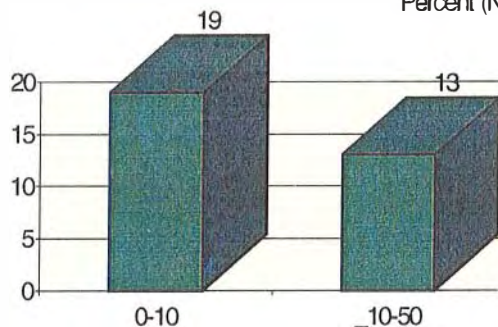
Since 1986, Increased, Decreased or Kept Same Amount of Land for Commercial Farming



Percent (N=404)

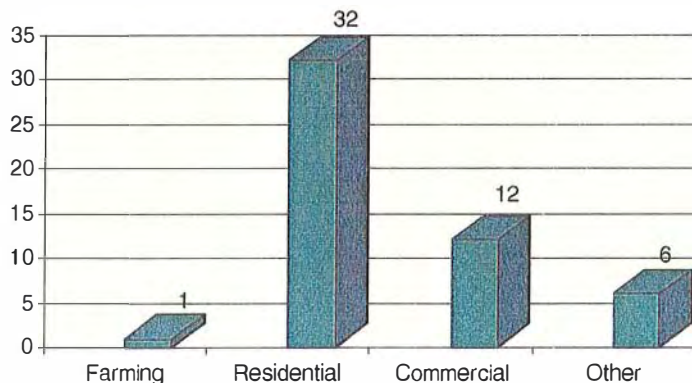
Compared to 1986/87 (a decade ago), have you increased, decreased, or kept the same amount of land devoted to commercial farming?

Amount of Acres Sold in Past Five Years
Percent (N=32)



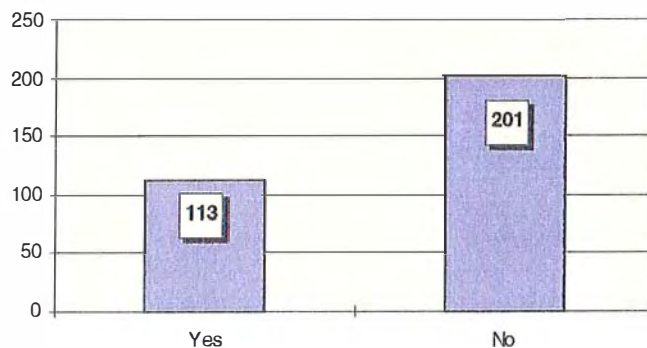
If you have sold farmland in Niagara County in the past five years, how many acres?

What Land is Now Used For
(N=51)

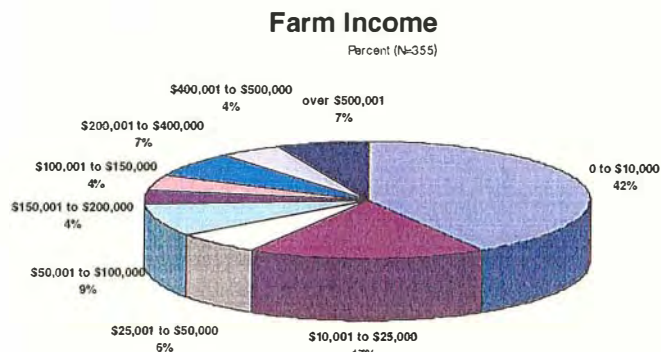


If you have sold farmland in Niagara County in the past five years, what is that land now being used for?

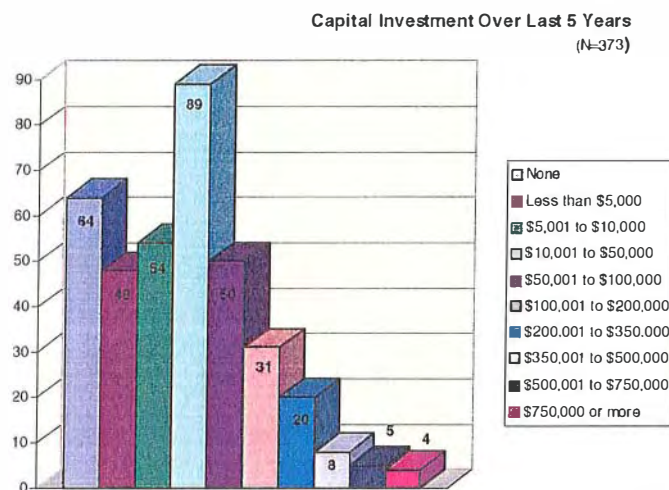
Do You Use Hired Help on Your Farm
(N=314)



Do you use hired help (non-family) in operating your farm?



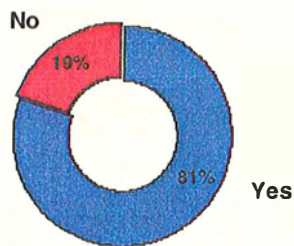
Please identify the range of gross of income generated by your business.



How much capital has been invested in your farm over the last five years?

Will Keep Land in Commercial Farming

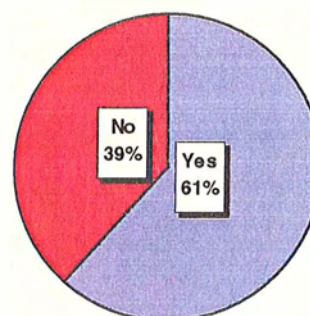
(N=409)



Do you intend to keep your land in commercial farming for the foreseeable future?

Will Sell Land for Non-Agricultural Use

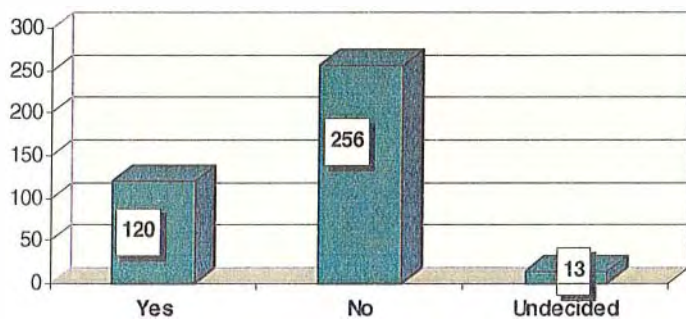
(N=427)



Might you eventually sell some or all of your farmland for non-agricultural use?

Family Member will Continue Operating the Farm

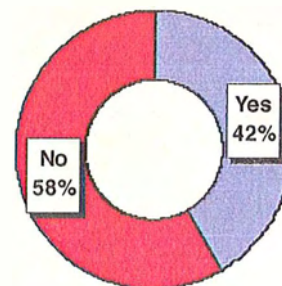
(N=389)



Will a family member likely continue operating your farm after your retirement?

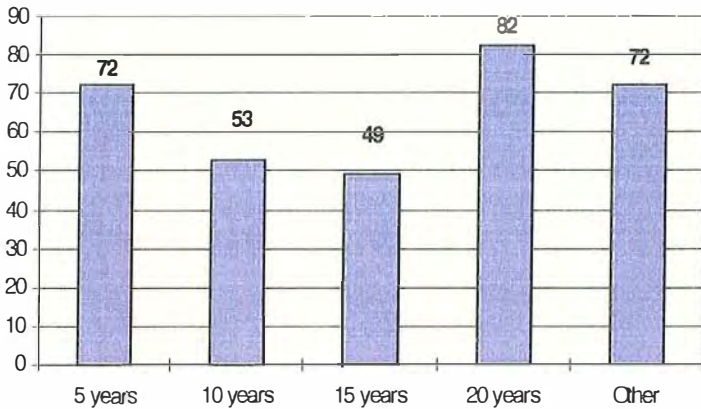
Sale of Farmland for Retirement Funds

Percent (N=425)



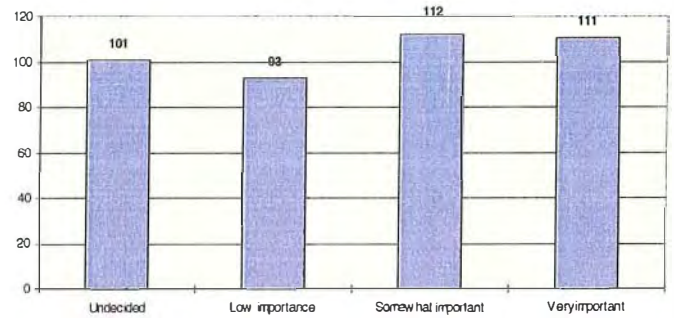
Do you expect the possible sale of your farmland for development to be a source of retirement funds?

Years Expect to Be Farming
(N=328)



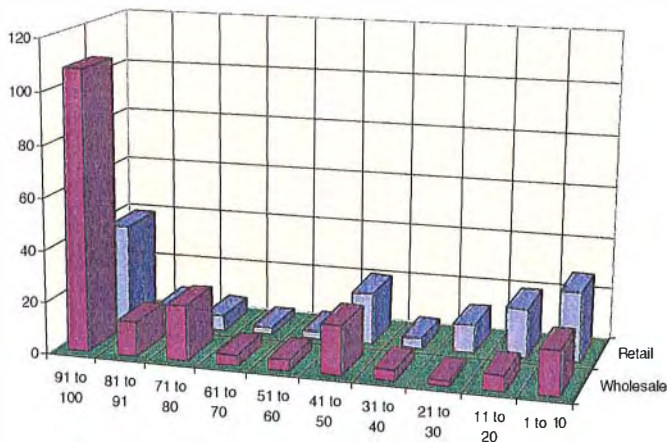
How many more years do you expect to be farming?

Importance of Keeping Land for Farming Beyond Retirement
(N=417)



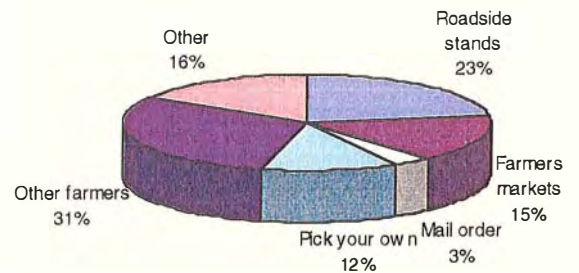
How important to you is the continuation of your land for farming beyond your retirement?

Percent of Sales Retailed and Wholesaled



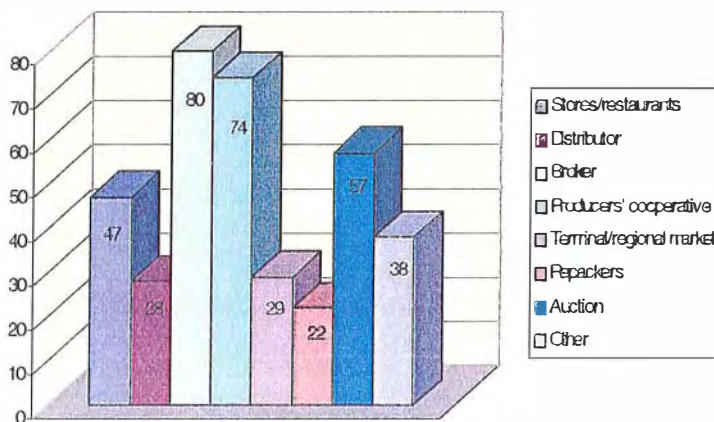
What percent of your total sales are retail? What percent of your sales are wholesale?

Direct Market Channels
Percent (N=286)



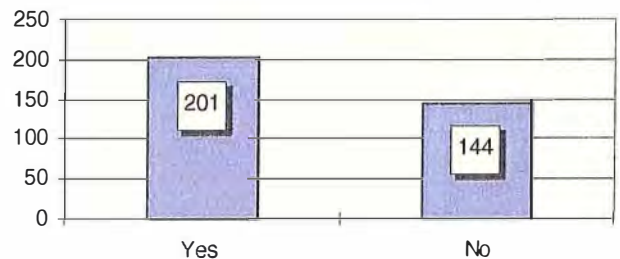
Which of the following direct market channels do you use, (if any)?

Wholesale Market Channels
(N=375)



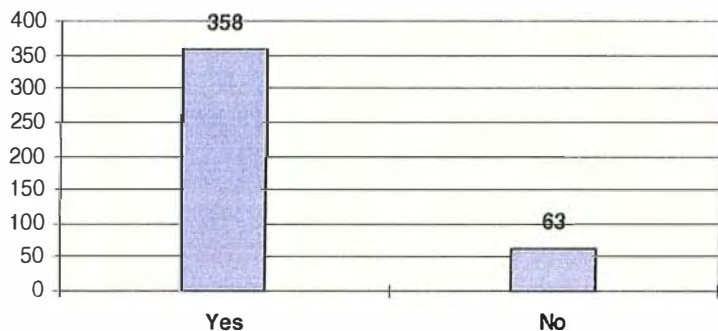
Which of the following wholesale market channels do you use?

Interested in Improving Marketing Skills
(N=345)



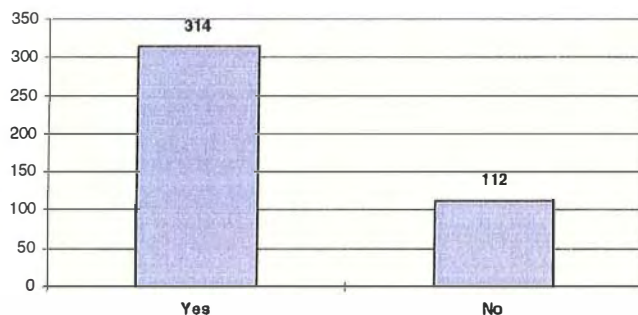
Would you be interested in improving your marketing skills and learning about new market opportunities?

Should Agricultural Districting Program Be Strengthened? (N=421)



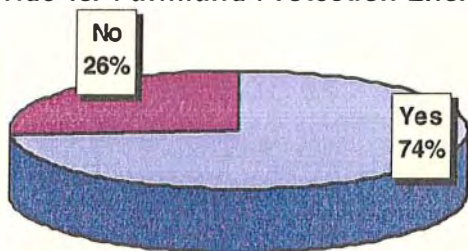
Do you believe the farmland protection elements of New York State's agricultural districting program should be strengthened?

Favor Legislation Which Restricts Development on Prime and Important Farmlands (N=426)



Would you favor local, state or federal legislation, which restricts development on prime and important farmland?

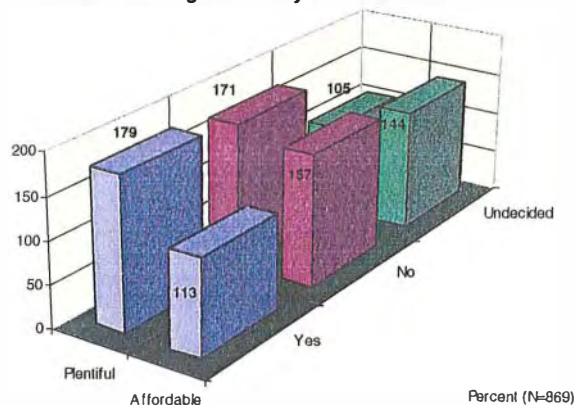
Would Support Using Public Funds to Provide for Farmland Protection Efforts



Percent (N=422)

Would you support using public funds to provide for farmland protection efforts?

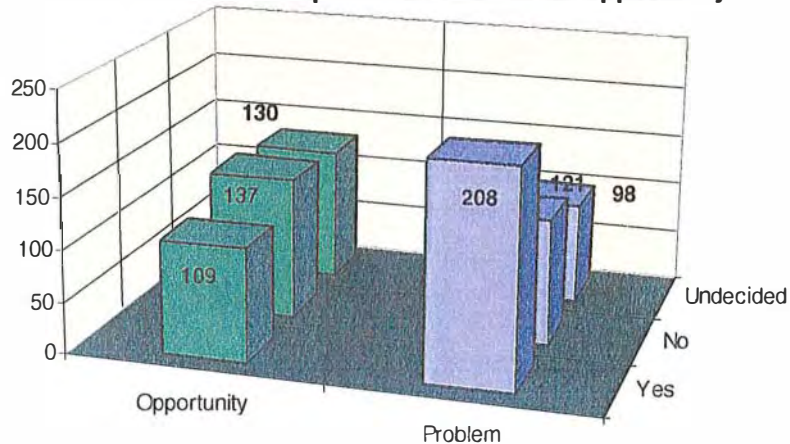
Farmland in Niagara County is Plentiful/Affordable



Percent (N=869)

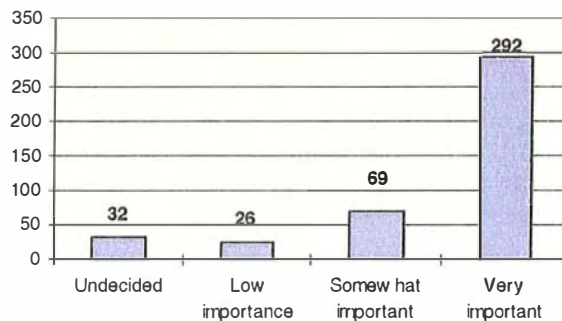
Do you feel that good farmland in Niagara County is plentiful and affordable for farmers who want to expand?

Is Residential Development a Problem Or Opportunity



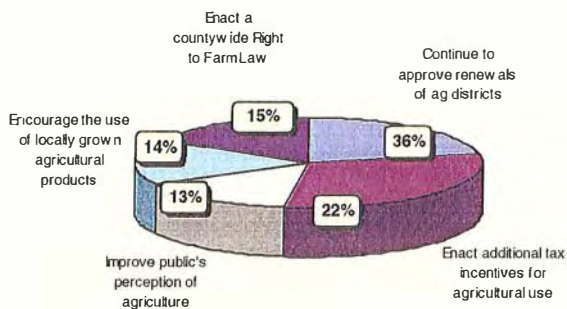
Do you think that residential development of farmland in Niagara County presents a problem for farmers or an opportunity for potential expanded markets?

Importance of Protecting Good Farmland for Agriculture (N=419)



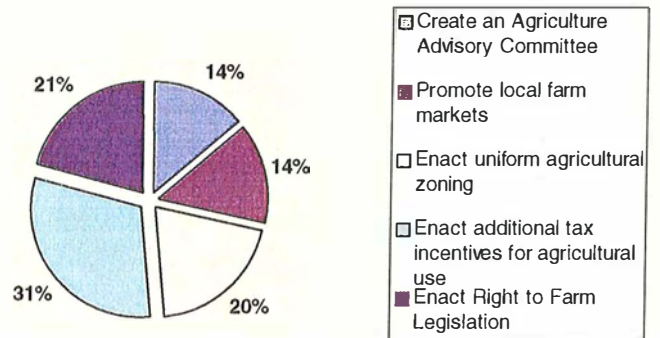
How important is the protection of good farmland for ongoing agricultural use?

Things County Could do to Promote Agriculture



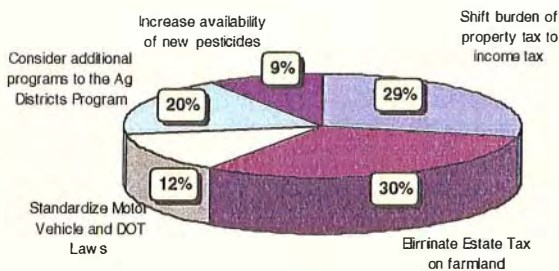
Indicate the three (3) most important things Niagara County could do to promote agriculture.

Things Your Town Could Do To Promote Agriculture



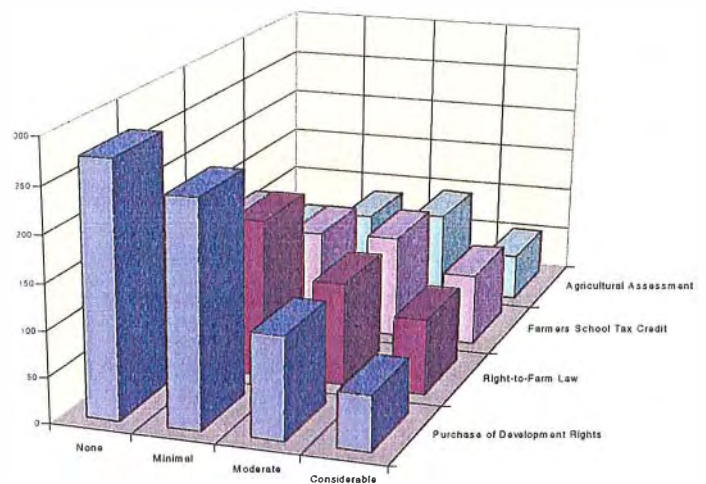
Indicate the three (3) most important things your Town could do to promote agriculture.

Things New York State Could Do to Promote Agriculture



Indicate the three (3) most important things New York State could do to promote agriculture.

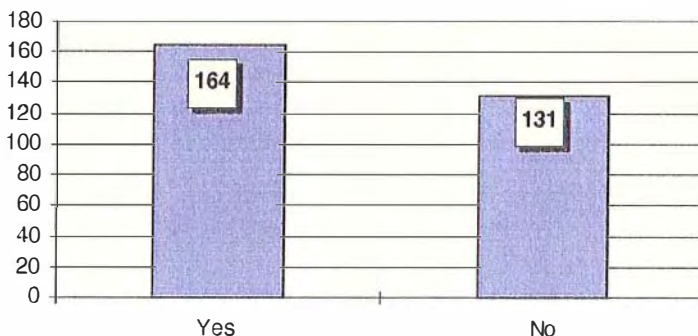
Familiarity With Concepts or Programs



Indicate how much familiarity you have with these concepts or programs?

Would You Sell Development Rights

(N=295)



If you could realize a fair profit from the sale of development rights of your land, and keep on farming it, (or keep it open for farming) would you accept this offer?

*

N=(number of responses). 429 surveys were tabulated. On some questions, a response rate of as much as 800 is shown. This is due to the number of choices a respondent can make to a particular question. Therefore the response rate would be the number of persons responding to a question, multiplied by the number of choices in the question.

On Question 2: Size of land holdings (acres). Inadvertently a range between 501-999 was omitted from the choices in this question.



Agriculture 716-433-2651

Home Economics 716-433-6773

4-H Youth Development 716-433-6731

Dear Neighbor;

The Niagara County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board, established by the Niagara County Legislature, is beginning the process of preparing a plan to promote the agriculture industry in Niagara County.

Niagara is the 20th county in New York State to use New York State Agriculture and Markets Farmland Protection Grant money to develop a strategy for agriculture. It is important to know what farmers and rural landowners like yourself think as we prepare recommendations to be reviewed in upcoming public forums.

Let me quickly say that this "plan" is not intended to tell you what you can do with your land, but rather to develop useful agricultural business retention and enhancement ideas. We want to find assistance for farmers who believe in a future for agriculture in Niagara County.

Those who return this survey will be entered into a drawing for (3) sizable gift certificates. The drawing will be held at a meeting open to survey participants and other interested persons. This meeting is set for Tuesday, February 10th at 7 p.m. at the Cornell Cooperative Extension Training Center on Lake Avenue, Lockport. We appreciate the support of C.J. Perry & Sons, Inc.; Niagara Ford New Holland, Inc. and Central Tractor Farm & Family for their generous certificate donations.

By completing the enclosed questionnaire, you will help the Niagara County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board understand how farmers and other rural residents view the changes in agriculture in Niagara County. *The information collected will be analyzed and only composite results will be reported. Therefore, you may express your opinions freely.*

Your input is important and greatly appreciated. Should you have any questions regarding this survey or the Farmland Protection Plan process in general, contact Paul Lehman or Julie Hayden at Cooperative Extension, 433-2651 during regular business hours. You may also want to direct your questions to farmer members of the Farmland Protection Board: James Bittner, Somerset; James Coulter, Cambria; La Vern Haseley, Niagara; Gary McCollum, Lockport; Gerald Helmich, Lewiston or George Staples, Somerset. We acknowledge The Niagara County Farm Bureau for their support in helping to develop this survey.

Yours truly,

Paul E. Lehman
Extension Educator

FARMLAND OWNER SURVEY

Agriculture & Farmland Protection Board of Niagara County

This survey is mailed to farmers and farmland owners in Niagara County. The responses will be tabulated and form the basis for the development of an Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan.

Instructions

1. This questionnaire is directed to the principal operator or partner of a farm or farm corporation. If you are not a farmer, please state your role in owning farmland: Rent land to a farmer _____ Other _____
2. Returned surveys will be entered into a drawing to be held during a meeting for survey participants and the general public at 7 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 10th at Cooperative Extension, Lake Avenue, Lockport. Please return the survey by January 10th.
3. No postage is required. Just mail the questionnaire in the enclosed envelope.
4. Questions? Call Julie Hayden or Paul Lehman at 433-2651 (Cornell Cooperative Extension)

Thank you very much for your time and comments!

TELL US ABOUT YOUR FARM...

The Land:

1. Location of your rural land holdings: In what town(s) is your rural property/ies located? _____
2. Size of land holdings (acres):
10-50 _____ 51-100 _____ 101-250 _____ 251-500 _____ 1000 or more _____
3. If you farm, what percentage of your land is owned and what percentage do you rent?
Own _____ % Rent _____ %
4. Farmland rentals:
a) Number of farm acres rented from others _____
b) Number of acres rented to farmers _____
5. Which of the following public utilities are available to service your property?
a) Public water
b) Public sewers
6. Are you getting an Agricultural Assessment (tax exemption) on lands which you own? _____ (y/n)
7. Do you consider that your farmland soils are mostly:
high quality _____ moderate quality _____ marginal or poor quality _____

8. Agriculture/farm operations pay more local taxes than they receive in local services.
 - a) Strongly Agree
 - b) Agree
 - c) Disagree
 - d) Strongly Disagree
9. If I could sell my farmland tomorrow for more than its value per acre for agricultural use, I would definitely sell.
 - a) Yes
 - b) No

The People:

10. What is your age _____?
11. If you farm, are you considering retiring in the next five years _____?
12. What is your gender _____?
13. Are you a: full-time farmer _____ part-time farmer _____ neither _____?
14. If your family operates a farm in Niagara County, for how many years _____?
15. Age of principal farm operator _____?
16. How many people in your family (or partners' families) work on the farm:
daily _____ weekly _____ part time _____ full time _____?

The Business:

17. Do you own more than 10 or more acres of land committed to a full-time or part-time commercial farm operation, with sales of agricultural products exceeding \$10,000 per year _____ (y/n)?
18. Compared to 1986/87 (a decade ago), have you increased, decreased or kept the same amount of land devoted to commercial farming?
 - a) Increased _____ percent increase (approx.) _____
 - b) Decreased _____ percent decreased (approx.) _____
 - c) Stayed the same _____
19. How significant is the availability of rented land (farmland rented from non-farmers) to the success of your commercial farm operation? (circle one):
 - a) Essential, with growing need for rented land.
 - b) Essential, but with no significant increase.
 - c) Non-essential; other options available.

20. Have you sold farmland in Niagara County in the past five years? _____ (y/n)? If "yes," how many acres _____. What is the land now used for: Farming _____ Residential _____, Commercial _____, Other(specify) _____

21. Do you use hired help (non-family) in operating your farm _____?

22. If "yes" how many are employed full-time? _____
part-time or seasonal? _____

23. How many people in your family (or partners' families) have employment off the farm _____?

24. How many households receive income from the farm _____?

25. Over the past five years how have your sales and profits changed? (check whatever applies):

	<u>Sales</u>	<u>Profits</u>
Increasing	_____	_____
Staying the same	_____	_____
Declining	_____	_____

26. What ideas, if any, do you have for improving farm profitability?

27. Which of the following incentives would most likely encourage you to expand your operations? (circle all that apply).

- a) Real estate abatement
- b) Low-interest loans
- c) Government subsidies
- d) Labor availability
- e) Relief from unfair international competition

28. Are there enough economic development incentives for agribusiness to expand in Niagara County?

- a) Yes
- b) No

29. Agritourism could help promote the economic viability of farming in Niagara County.

- a) Strongly Agree
- b) Agree
- c) Disagree
- d) Strongly Disagree

30. Have you had complaints from neighbors about your farm practices _____ (y/n)?
If "yes," what was the nature of their complaint?

Have the complaints been resolved _____ (y/n)?

31. What changes do you anticipate making with the farm in the next five years?

(circle all that apply):

- | | |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| a) More livestock/trees/vines | f) Sell some land |
| b) Bigger/better equipment | g) Diversify products or services |
| c) Take off-farm job | h) Sell whole farm |
| d) Less livestock/trees/vines | i) no change |
| e) Buy more land | j) other _____ |

32. Would you consider diversifying into other production or activities if you had technical and financial support _____ (y/n)? If "yes," what other production or activity interests you?

33. Which of the following agricultural operations describes what you own and/or operate? Please circle all that apply.

- | | |
|--|----------------------------------|
| a) Fruits | e) Nursery (includes Xmas trees) |
| b) Vegetables | f) Greenhouse |
| c) U-pick operation (fruits and vegetables) | g) Dairy |
| d) Field crops (grain, hay, dry beans, etc.) | h) Horses |
| | i) Sheep, poultry, hogs, beef |
| | j) Other _____ |

34. Please identify the range of gross income generated by your business:

- | | |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------|
| a) 0 to \$10,000 | f) \$150,001 to \$200,000 |
| b) \$10,001 to \$25,000 | g) \$200,001 to \$400,000 |
| c) \$25,001 to \$50,000 | h) \$400,001 to \$500,000 |
| d) \$50,001 to \$100,000 | i) over \$500,001 |
| e) \$100,001 to \$150,000 | j) Do not own a farm business |

35. How much capital has been invested in your farm over the last five years?

- | | |
|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| a) None | f) \$100,001 to \$200,000 |
| b) Less than \$5,000 | g) \$200,001 to \$350,000 |
| c) \$5,001 to \$10,000 | h) \$350,001 to \$500,000 |
| d) \$10,001 to \$50,000 | i) \$500,001 to \$750,000 |
| e) \$50,001 to \$100,000 | j) \$750,001 or more |

The Outlook for Farming

36. Do you intend to keep your land in commercial farming for the foreseeable future ____ (y/n)? If "no," please explain:

37. Might you eventually sell some or all of your farmland for non-agricultural use ____ (y/n)?

38. Will a family member likely continue operating your farm after your retirement ____ (y/n)?

39. Do you expect the possible sale of your farmland for development to be a source of retirement funds ____ (y/n)?

40. How many more years do you expect to be farming?

5 years ____ 10 years ____ 15 years ____ 20 years ____ Other ____.

41. How important to you is the continuation of your land for farming beyond your retirement?

Undecided ____ Low importance ____ Somewhat important ____ Very Important ____.

Marketing Your Product: There are two basic ways of marketing agricultural commodities -- directly to the final consumer or through wholesale markets.

42. What percentage of your total sales are retail? ____%

43. What percentage of your total sales are wholesale? ____%

44. Which of the following direct market channels do you use (if any)?

(PLEASE CHECK ALL THAT APPLY.)

____ Roadside stands

____ Pick your own

____ Farmers markets

____ Other farmers

____ Mail order

____ Other: _____

45. Which of the following wholesale market channels do you use?

(PLEASE CHECK ALL THAT APPLY.)

____ Stores/restaurants

____ Terminal/regional market

____ Distributor

____ Repackers

____ Broker (commission sale)

____ Auction

____ Producers' cooperative

____ Other: _____

46. Would you be interested in improving your marketing skills and learning about new market opportunities? _____ Yes _____ No

Views About Farmland Use:

47. Do you feel that too much prime and important farmland is being lost as a result of conversion to non-agricultural uses? _____ (y/n)

48. Do you approve or disapprove of programs which would help agricultural landowners retain their land and not sell to non-farmers? approve _____ disapprove _____

49. Do you believe the farmland protection elements of New York State's agricultural districting program should be strengthened? _____ (y/n)

50. Would you favor local, state or federal legislation which restricts development on prime and important farmland? _____ (y/n)

51. Would you support using public funds to provide for farmland protection efforts? _____ (y/n)

52. Do you think that good farmland in Niagara County is plentiful and affordable for farmers who want to expand? Check one:

a) Plentiful: Yes _____ No _____ Undecided _____

b) Affordable: Yes _____ No _____ Undecided _____

53. Do you think that residential development of farmland in Niagara County presents a problem for farmers or an opportunity for potential expanded markets? Check one:

Problem: Yes _____ No _____ Undecided _____

Opportunity Yes _____ No _____ Undecided _____

54. How important is the protection of good farmland for ongoing agricultural use? undecided _____ low importance _____ somewhat important _____ very important _____

55. Indicate the **three (3) most important things** Niagara County could do to promote agriculture:

- a) Continue to approve the renewals of Agricultural Districts.
- b) Enact additional tax incentives for agricultural use
- c) Improve public's perception of agriculture
- d) Encourage the use of locally grown agricultural products
- e) Enact a countywide Right To Farm Law

56. Indicate **three (3) most important things** your **Town** could do to promote agriculture:

- a) Create an Agriculture Advisory Committee
- b) Promote Local Farm Markets
- c) Enact uniform Agricultural Zoning
- d) Enact additional tax incentives for agricultural use
- e) Enact Right To Farm Legislation

57. Indicate the **three (3) most important things** **New York State** could do to promote agriculture.

- a) Shift the burden of property tax to an income related tax
- b) Eliminate the Estate Tax on farmland
- c) Standardize Motor Vehicle and Department of Transportation Laws for farm vehicles
- d) Consider additional programs to the Agricultural Districts Program
- e) Increase the availability of new pesticides

58. Indicate how much familiarity you have with these concepts or programs:

- a) Purchase of Development Rights (PDR):
None _____ Minimal _____ Moderate _____ Considerable _____.
- b) Right-to-Farm law:
None _____ Minimal _____ Moderate _____ Considerable _____.
- c) Farmers School Tax Credit:
None _____ Minimal _____ Moderate _____ Considerable _____.
- d) Agricultural Assessment:
None _____ Minimal _____ Moderate _____ Considerable _____.

59. If you could realize a fair profit from the sale of the development rights of your land, and keep on farming it, (or keep it open for farming) would you accept this offer _____(y/n)?

Thank you for all of your work. Please return your form in the enclosed envelope by January 10th. We hope that you will be able to attend the Tuesday, Feb. 10th meeting at 7 p.m. at Cooperative Extension Training Center, Lake Avenue, Lockport to discuss this survey with the other respondents. And good luck in the drawing!

Please use the back of this survey for any additional comments you wish to make.

Comments:

TOWN OF _____

It is our hope that this survey instrument will address most of the major issues and concerns that the County will need to consider as we prepare a preliminary draft of the Niagara County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan. In the event we have failed to ask a question on this survey that you feel needs to be brought to the public's attention, please use this sheet to identify this matter.

[illegible]

**FARMLAND OWNER SURVEY
NARRATIVE RESPONSES:**

Question 26 asks: "What ideas, if any, do you have for improving farm profitability?"

- 1. Increase advertising.**
- 2. Need to find better markets for our products.**
- 3. Diversify**
- 4. There is no cooperation between large and small farms.**
- 5. None! For all practical purposes I see little future in terms of profitability for agriculture.**
- 6. If one figures inflation, sales and profits have decreased. As long as farmers want to be individuals, I have no ideas. Farmers should see what Tops etc. are doing to them and react by speaking with one voice. But this is considered a violation of anti trust laws; we need to change this.**
- 7. Exploring new ideas to cut the cost of natural gas (fuel) for two greenhouses.**
- 8. Less taxes, cheaper utilities and more direct sales.**
- 9. Replace old orchard with new orchard.**
- 10. Do away with government regulations and interference.**
- 11. Have the government stay out of farming and cut back on imports so what we raise we can get a fair price to stay in farming.**
- 12. Do not import any food we can produce in this country. Break up big super market chains which control markets.**
- 13. Reduce taxes and fees associated with farming and secondary farming activities i.e., food processing.**
- 14. Let free market rein—no government programs or price setting or disaster loans.**
- 15. Focus more on growing hay and crops that you can sell to small farms that have horses or one or two beef cows.**
- 16. Decrease debt and increase knowledge of techniques.**
- 17. Shift the burden of property tax.**
- 18. Eliminate government price support and set-aside programs. They don't work as they were originally intended anymore, and only drain the remaining ag system.**
- 19. Less tax. Farmers must form a union to get a handle on the abuse we put up with.**
- 20. Higher prices for products sold. Lower prices for machinery, fertilizer and seed.**
- 21. Stop taxing—less interference from Cornell.**
- 22. Being a landowner who doesn't farm, I would be interested in allowing my land to be farmed by others, but they would have to clear it.**
- 23. Increasing yield, better wholesale marketing, also more direct sales.**
- 24. Education opportunities for small farmers—latest farming methods, farm programs, government assistance, etc.**
- 25. Need to keep government out of manipulating agricultural prices (ex milk). We need to price our products rather than being told what to pay.**
- 26. Would like to see biomass/wood pellet production encouraged in Niagara County.**

27. Control our products all the way to the consumer. Stop city people from building on productive farmland.
28. Try to interest more young people in agriculture.
29. Control imports. We can make most of the clean healthy food we need at home where standards are stricter.
30. Promotion of locally grown meats and produce.
31. Lower electricity costs and county and school taxes also.

Question 30 asks: "Have you had complaints from neighbors about your farm practices?"

1. I'm sure I will as my neighbors sell off lots to people who want to "enjoy the country." I've made complaints to neighbors who think my farm is part of the country they should be free to enjoy!
2. Smell.
3. Cows crossing the road. All-hour farming, spring and fall. Smell of cows and manure wagon. Owning herd bulls and having horned cows.
4. Spraying, noise, pesticide usage.
5. People building new homes near bee yards do not like bees, usually the result is I have to find new places to keep the bees and move out of the old place.
6. Don't like free-range animals even when they're fenced. Instead of calling the farmer if an animal gets loose, they call the sheriff or state police.
7. Noise, odors, sprayers and use of rodent baits have been criticized.
8. Smell from cabbage fields.
9. Spraying at night. Equipment on the road.
10. Grain dryer noise.
11. Smell of cabbage.
12. Too many people, tractors and wagons crossing the road. Our farm is on both sides of the road.
13. Harvest noise, dust, pesticides, mud on the roads.
14. Flies from cows, smell, not neat, too much equipment around. Town interference wants cows moved 500' from neighbors, but won't pay for extending driveway 500' back or waterline and power extended.
15. Working late. Pesticide application.
16. They complain about everything I do. Almost all the neighbors want me to give it up, but not to develop the land in any other way either, just pay the taxes and let the land sit idle for their use. No way, of course.
17. Spraying at night (after 10 p.m.)
18. Crop residue draws rats.
19. Don't spread manure, stop work at 6 p.m. Control dust and odors, don't pasture livestock next to their buildings.

20. When we first purchased land, it was “used” by neighbors for all terrain vehicles.

We had a hard time keeping them off (after posting, etc.) we lost a lot of young trees.

21. Driving equipment all night!

Question 32 asks, “Would you consider diversifying into other production or activities if you had technical and financial support. If yes, what other production or activity interests you?”

- 1. More bait farming.**
- 2. More hay and pasture.**
- 3. Development.**
- 4. Have own milk store on the farm (cow & goat) or set up an auction barn, like in Springville.**
- 5. Nursery, corn, housing development.**
- 6. Farming in a climate-controlled environment.**
- 7. Scientific development of experimental crops.**
- 8. Consider small niche crops such as herbs.**
- 9. Convert to a golf course.**
- 10. Agri-service support for other farmers**

Question 36 asks, “Do you intend to keep your land in commercial farming for the foreseeable future? If no, please explain.”

- 1. If they brought sewers down the road, we would sell off lots.**
- 2. Cannot get dependable help.**
- 3. I’m retired; my fields are odd-shaped with two large ditches running clear across the farm. No one wants to work it. The only farmer we have around here is a large operator. He didn’t feel my farm was worth working.**
- 4. Sell to developer or farmer.**
- 5. I must pay taxes—school & county, which I do not have an income to pay for this, so it will have to go.**
- 6. Most of my land is committed to a conservation reserve program and is intended to become reforested area.**
- 7. I have a good off-farm job. The farm is more of a place to live & escape to rather than a business.**
- 8. We are retired and only keep 16 head of cattle to keep us busy and help pay the taxes.**
- 9. I have no one to follow on so it will be sold as soon as I am dead. I do not see it being retained in agriculture, and there are no young farmers in the area that would be interested in keeping it in farming.**
- 10. Willing, able and reliable hired help not available. Decided to retire to off-farm job.**

11. Would like to make lots for homes.
12. As long as someone is willing to rent the land.
13. I will continue to rent acreage.
14. Intend to sell off for building lots.
15. It goes to the highest offer!

Comments:

On the back of the survey is an area for comments as follows:

"It is our hope that this survey instrument will address most of the major issues and concerns that the County will need to consider as we prepare a preliminary draft of the Niagara County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan. In the event we have failed to ask a question on this survey that you feel needs to be brought to the public's attention, please use this sheet to identify this matter."

1. I am now 75 and still live on my farm. I do not sell enough to qualify for any tax breaks. I would like to see breaks for under \$10,000 sales. I think fewer older farmers would sell off land for lots.
2. In the County of Niagara, there is not even one designated riding trail for horses. I would like to see some designated trails and agreements with owners of farmland for use of their land for such purposes.
3. Part of my farm is considered "wet lands"—why is this portion taxed the same as the rest of the farm when there are many restriction on those wet lands?
4. It seems that the older generation, 45 and up, truly does appreciate farming and what it involves to be a farmer and be profitable, because at one point in their lives they had a small farm and were exposed to the land and farming. The new generation has little or no exposure to agriculture—what it is and how it works—timely planting and harvesting and the dedication it takes to farm. They're spoiled (most of them) and don't realize we grow what they eat everyday.
5. I do not use this property. It has remained fallow and unused for more than 35 years. I would like to plant it in trees for harvest in 20 years. However, I neither have the machinery to do the preparation nor the manpower to help plant and maintain it. I may be able to accomplish this later, but I live in Pennsylvania and it's very difficult.
6. Response to Question #47: Prime agricultural land and building land are usually the same.
Response to Questions 55-57: All efforts of our town, city, county and state are useless if people in this area are not aware or not will not purchase locally grown products. Not all of us growers are able to sell out of the area or state.
7. Is the government after big co-op farms to do all the producing and family farms, individually owned out of the picture? At the present I think there will be a big decrease in farms in Niagara County—dairy, fruit, beef, etc. Once farmland is taken out of production for homes etc., it can never be replaced and there is nothing that

makes land, what is here is here. With population increase by the year 2020 sometimes I wonder where the food will come from.

8. The only way to protect farmland and preserve it for farming is to get state and federal government out of farming totally. Do away with all support programs, regulations and cheap food policies. Farmland protection programs are not the answer because once the money paid for development rights is gone, the farmer is still faced with producing a crop that can be imported cheaper than he can grow it. Then, if he wants to sell out he has a commodity to sell, which is distressed because he has no development rights and owns only part of his property. How do you think that urban or suburban property owner would feel if told he could only sell the house at the value of one story of a two-story house, or half of the depth of their lot?
9. We purchased the above acreage with the future plan to subdivide it and sell off two-acre lots at a time.
10. Please do whatever you can to help protect and encourage farming in Niagara County. Tax incentives to promote young people into farming seems more than appropriate. We do it to attract business and industry, why not farming? For example:
 - a) Purchase a farm for \$120,000
 - b) Tax year No. 1 at 10% of levy
 - c) Tax year No. 2 at 15% of levy
 - d) Etc. until you reach 100%

People need food to survive and we need farmers to supply that food. Let's send a clear message to our population—Farming can be an attractive way of life.

11. Farming needs to be treated as any other business, receiving the same benefits and following the same laws. Farming needs to be allowed to succeed or fail under a free enterprise system, not under special privileges or subsidies. What remains afterwards will then be profitable, even against global competition.
12. Do we as a country wish to maintain our small farms or do we wish to continue to move toward mega operations? Small farms maintenance requires that the income levels of operators be enhanced to a "living amount" from that of "open market" prices currently received. Returns per bushel for small farms are required to be in the \$10.00 range. This requires subsidy to small farms in the range of \$7.00 per bushel of corn. Agricultural resource is much too valuable to be centralized in a few large mega operations. This approach is OK as long as things run smoothly—no disease, etc. In the final analysis, diverse agriculture spread across a multitude of farms providing a living for the operators and their families will cost society (taxpayers and consumers) no more than our present system. This additionally reduces risk to the country by not allowing too much power to be accumulated by too few.
13. There should be laws to regulate the amount of acres that a person has or rents for the amount of animals they have. A large number of small horse farms and city farmers have sprung up in our town. If they have 10 acres they fence it and put 8 or 10 horses or even board horses or other animals in the area and they don't have any place left to spread the manure. They should have better trespasser laws against people riding ATV's and horses on farmland that they don't own and they destroy

crops and punch holes in it. The fines should be included with the amount of crop damage paid to the farmer so they don't have to take these people to small claims court all the time.

14. The most important thing that can be done is buying the development rights for a fair price that a farmer could get from a developer. I don't believe any good farmer would sell his or her land for development if they could get the same amount of money from somebody that would keep it in agriculture.
15. I own 20 acres on Ridge Road. It is all trees with no income, but the usual taxes. Since I've been retired since 1985 and on a fixed income, the taxes are a burden. I hope you can help in giving me some guidance. What advice or option is open to me? Thanks. I need all the help I can get.
16. I think the poor land like mine should be used for development, not the good land. But common sense doesn't exist.
17. I have talked to Dave Seaman and George Maziarz about the elimination of the property tax and making school support and county support from income tax or an increase of sales tax. I am alone and they won't listen. People on fixed incomes (retired people) and people who for some reason have lost or have lowered incomes are having hard times paying property tax. Agriculture would take off strong in NYS if this would change. This would be an equal tax. I would help get this done if someone else thinks this is good.
18. Should Cooperative Extension, Farm Bureau or anyone else consider the following: BOCES, create and promote a farm business curriculum for high school students? Contact farms to remind them of the new STAR program.
19. My land is having its use changed from agriculture to long-term reforestation. To date I have planted over 8,000 seedlings of mixed species—coniferous and deciduous. Beneficial aspects to me would be forbearance from property taxes (school and county), not total, by the way. Assistance in managing forest land. Educational assistance in forest growth aspects. Financial assistance to create ponds for wildlife. Financial assistance to improve drainage. Participation in solar power and wind power electrical generation. (And any other activity that is non-polluting and conservationist).
20. I feel that farms that are either farmed or left undeveloped should have a major tax decrease because of the lack of providing utility and town services. I am not in favor of farmland being restricted from development as eventually all land will be sold and we should all be able to get the best price whether it is to continue farming or for the potential development into residential sites. I feel very strongly about this. If the neighbor who lives nearby likes the idea of open land, then they should buy it and pay the taxes and then they can own and enjoy their "own" land not mine which they have no claim to just like I shouldn't be able to tell them what to do with their homesite which obviously at one time was farmland or at least undeveloped. I get upset when others try to tell us all what we can or can't do after they already have theirs.
21. There is minimum of service—absolutely no enforcement of private lands for ATV use or unauthorized hunters. On Thanksgiving Day 11 hunters were found on my property. I was almost killed and two days later a deputy would not issue a

summons. Youngsters under 12 constantly destroy property with ATVs, summer and fall. If reported, nothing happens. There is no water available for three parcels of property on my end of Chestnut Road. When property is damaged...no one would do anything. Litter from McDonalds is outrageous. Drainage continues to be a problem and there is no directive from the Supervisor to repair the problems, which were addressed 50 years ago. There is no speed enforcement on Chestnut and some days speeds increase to well over 70mph on country roads. There is no respect for the warning signs on hay wagons or farm equipment.

22. I have bees in other places than at home. I rent places to keep them, but it is not like renting farmland (I need just a small spot to keep them) and it seems to be getting harder and harder to find places to keep bees in Niagara County.
23. I see with the disappearance of farmland a hardship for those who would like to continue in the farming profession. And a big question if all this farmland disappears over the future generations—How and where are we going to get food to feed the masses?
24. I retired nine years ago. For seven years after, I kept cutting the hay and selling that. Two years ago, I had an auction and sold the tools. I now have signed with the seven-year program and get a yearly check for that. My farm is a dairy setup that I used for twenty-six years and was profitable but I see the way dairying is today and I realize my setup is outdated. I've kept the place very presentable, but that doesn't make the profits and no one has ever showed any interest to carrying on the farm. People that are not interested in farming have shown interest and that seems to be the way I will have to get rid of the farm.
25. Please keep in mind individual landowner freedom. Landowners have already paid for grants, subsidies etc. and should be available to all, not just political favorites.
26. Many landowners will sell road frontage lots, which makes it difficult to farming land in back. Dust, noise and spraying are also difficult. Something should be done somehow.
27. This farm has been a working dairy farm for over 80 years and even during the depression we made a living. Now with the prices we are receiving for our milk and with no debt we still can not survive on current milk prices. We are not going in debt to increase our production and get a lot bigger. It is too bad with some of the best-drained land in this area that I can not survive in this economy.
28. The main issue that should be noted is that high tax and rules and crazy assessments for property taxes are choking the farmers. Until people face that fact it is no use spending anyone's time and money to avoid a sure conclusion. Why should I pay for a residential lot on my farmland? That has to stop, assessments should be made proper, not the potential of land worth. Review the layers of regulation, not only by the state and local governments, but also the buyers of the product being grown. Some of the buyer's practices should be reviewed by you to see if they are fair and true. Farming is a hard business- very weather dependent; an item that no one can remedy. But someone should review how to: 1) Lower taxes. 2) Review and simplify regulations. 3) Review assessments of land truthfully.
29. Because of the high property taxes on real estate, combined with the high cost of development due to government restrictions and regulations, new housing has been

restricted to road frontage. This strip development mentality in New York has created a reduction in the land value, or the back lands and created a conflict between the farmer and the rural resident. New York has to get its priorities in order and develop an overall plan on saving agricultural land and planning development. Nowhere else in rural America is the destruction of farmland by strip development allowed to go on unabated.

30. The Town of Lockport seems to be pushing very hard to reopen Day Road Bridge and push development beyond. They seem to be in a "couldn't care less mode" about the serious damage to agriculture, ecology and agritourism etc. The damage would spill over like a cancer beyond Lockport and they don't care about that either. I would like to see a petition circulated against this and submitted to the town and state levels. Make form letters available for the concerned to mail to their representatives in various government levels. History has shown when a nation fails to maintain its own agriculture and depends on others more than itself, it is in grave danger of falling as a nation. We need to expand our farm lands, not destroy them in favor of more housing, malls, trailer parks, etc. School taxes should be collected from everyone not just property/business owners. There is an enormous amount of parents out there getting a free ride for their kids off our backs. Farm houses and owners of houses with 50 or more acres of adjoining land should pay a lower tax rate on their house than those of the opposite. People talk of concerns over the rain forest and its effect on weather, ozone, etc.—what of farm, hunting and wet lands right here, right now! If we don't stop development and protect these lands now, who shall? When is it too late?
31. I feel the public should be aware of all the businesses that have come to Niagara County and got big tax breaks to move into our county. Let them know of all the farms that we have lost in Niagara County because they just don't pay the farmer for the work he does. Ask them a question—What do you do when you are hungry? We have to keep our sons and grandsons on the farm, not for their good, but for the benefit of everyone. This is a good start for Niagara County. I can see a lot of work that has to be done. If there is anything I can do to help, let me know.
32. It seems in general that politicians and the people that say they help farmers do not help and it seems that the farmer through the years has fairly gotten no help at all from those that say they want to help. Young farmers, who want to take over their father's farm, are in an unattainable position to make a living and pay their folks a reasonable price for the farm. It is almost impossible. Generally speaking, farmers carry debt when they retire to the grave. What little they have left Uncle Sam takes. The father dies and leaves the debt to the next generation. That is not the way I was brought up. A farmer who wants to be a success has to work 100s of hours a week. That is the reason my children left the farm. They are both making over six figures in an industrial job. What farmer makes that?
33. Due to high prices for machinery, and government price controls for the farmer of his products, he cannot operate and make a living. Taxes on farm property are much too high.
34. I believe that the best ways to protect farmland is to tax heavily all forms of subdivided land via a file fee or some sort of other method to make it hard to profit

from shrinking lot sizes. (Only farmers want 40 or more acre lots.) Ag co-ops are the only good method for marketing. Beef and pork are not part of this farm because today they can't pay.

35. My land is lying fallow. I have never been farming it. I bought it in 1956 or so. It was previously a prune orchard. The dead trees were removed, but now it is all overgrown. I'm keeping it for my children.
36. Town and county need to work to improve drainage. Town and county need to widen roads to make it safer and easier to move equipment on roads. Farming community needs to improve its attitude when dealing with public.
37. It is fortunate that people (extension et.al) are looking at these concerns before they become problems. Our farm community has to realize that in an "us" against "them" situation, the farm community will always lose, because there are many more of "them" than "us".
38. The Town of Porter is looking to expand the amount of land zoned commercial as this type of land is rare in this town. The only way to achieve this will be to rezone some agriculture areas. The town also wants more industrial zoning. If we are going to save this good farm area it has to be done now, before we lose any more. Just thinking about it or talking about it won't get anything done. You have to make some changes in the laws to help us keep this land productive in farming.
39. Farming and the rewards of farming have always been the heart of our county. However, the economic rewards should somehow be raised to keep and protect this essential traditional business. There must be a sweeping and radical tax advantage to keep land use as farming. Consider the idea of putting your land in a multi-year agreement where the owner would get a 100% tax waiver for any acreage being farmed. Vacant but fertile land would be opened to existing farmers, open doors to new farmers and would minimize the chances of landowners selling home sites. Just as an IDA industrial development agency creates deals or large incentives or rewards. This is an effective tool for luring corporations and developers to certain areas, why not do this with farmers to take a proactive approach to encourage farming and farmers.
40. Try to keep and encourage small farming.
41. I would like to know how many acres of prime farmland the State needs for ducks and geese; they are a growing problem to us who farm close to the swamps. I would like to see the thousands of dollars spent on dikes put toward the farmers to feed the people and the heck with the ducks and geese.
42. I would like to be paid for land taken for wet land. I would like to know what gives the town the right to take my house and 10 acres put on homestead and the rest of the land is put on non-homestead paying more taxes on empty than the house. To me both cases are robbery. Just because I don't farm any more.
43. I believe it's time we took advantage of this county's unique and diversified farm products along with our lake shore areas. Our tourism industry could be expanded on in ways all residents of the county would benefit.
44. I believe there is a real threat to farming in many parts of Niagara County due to individual towns and their promotion of building developments. I think there

should be more protections regarding the development of farmland into multiple housing units.

45. The programs of soil conservation could be expanded and maybe less restrictions on time in the programs, such as 10 years for vegetation maintenance by creeks and ditches.
46. Education. What about the next generation? This is a good start, but we must look to the future. The next generation needs to see some incentives and feel the pride of being a farmer. We own 100 acres that was previously a dairy farm. It is now rented and has family animals on it. I wish my sons would see it as a business opportunity in the future, but it is unlikely. Farmers are now having problems staying in business. The chance to start farming is almost non-existent
47. Availability of labor for agricultural tasks. Unfairness of unemployment laws to the farmer. Farmland drainage issues including road ditch maintenance.
48. I loved being a farmer. I have seen great changes in farming during my lifetime, much for the good. Better and bigger yields of crops, better producing livestock, larger and better farm machinery. Some of things that are not progressive are the environmentalist, spotted owl people, rain forest people who distort facts to gain a false conclusion. We have become greedy and not willing to be a cooperative and helpful neighbor. Many exceptions of course.
49. I am very part-time as a farmer. My son and I do it more as a hobby than business because we enjoy it. The expense of keeping the land from taxes and such makes it hard to justify continuing. But the biggest problem is the constant interference and harassment from local town officials who seem to be trying to make it impossible to continue raising livestock specifically and farm in general. I would like to continue as I am until I retire and pass the farm on to my son, but the town and the taxes might force me to give up and begin an Amherst-type development if I don't get relief.
50. Each town in the county should have a commission on agriculture and farmland protection.
51. I disapprove of so much farmland being sold for housing, when people need to eat. What will the future hold for us? The farm has been in my husband's family for four generations. I would like it to continue to be a family project.
52. As mentioned in other parts of this form, I think the following would benefit the residents of Niagara County: 1. Study of biomass production (wood pellet and wood chip) as a viable economic endeavor in Hartland. Production could be purchased by power plants or residential owners of stoves. No other location has the rapid growth potential for red willow as Hartland in Niagara County. 2. Agricultural exemption for farm owners between cuts.
53. Eliminate all property taxes and implement a flat sales or income tax. Consolidate government agencies and reduce duplicate spending. Less government, not more legislation.
54. I've been here 46 years, and the ditches have never been cleaned, so wetland is a problem. I haven't farmed in at least 10 years; my barn blew down in 1975. I just raise food for myself and to give away.

55. Personal power enhancement by administrators and politicians controlling sewer and water districts, IDAs cause sprawl. Rural land is relatively cheap and industries leaving cities with black holes, then locating in towns with tax abatements and demands for city services. Soon there will be no definite cities and no pure country; just a mish mash. But what can you do?
56. When people move to a rural area, they must realize that they do not bring the city with them. Some do not want to give up any of what they have had. A move means change and acceptance of others and their ways, manure smells! That's the way it is. Farmers get up early and need to be able to run equipment at all hours. Farmers don't sleep in...noise to one is music to another.
57. Taxes are high-end and getting higher. It's hard for a young couple to get going and make any money on a farm now a days.
58. We rent 58 acres to keep the land in production.
59. Keep main drainage ditches opened. Keep roadsides clean and mowed. Plant trees or shrubs on roadside right-of-ways.
60. Ability to raise prices with rising costs. However, customers will not pay more for food from year to year. The public is poorly educated with regards to the cost of farm operations.
61. Small farm operations can't make it with the tax structures, limited places to market. The middleman controls prices and profits. County does a very poor job on drainage maintenance and improvements. The Middle East problems will further hurt exports. Passing on farm assets in the family is most difficult due to estate taxes, etc. Depreciation changes and capital equipment costs create a further problem in developing new farmers or an on-going effort by a family member. Most have poor cash flow and subject to acts of God that are at times impossible to deal with.
62. As far as I am concerned, farming in the southern part of Royalton is doomed. We have too many new people moving in who could care less if there are any farmers or not. I have lived on Riddle road most of my life. At one time every farm on the road had some kind of livestock or income from farming. Most of the road is growing up to brush, which is good for wildlife. Nobody in my family is interested in agriculture, so when I die this place will grow up also. Some parts of my place have been in the family for five generations, but I can see the end. The problems is when a person can make \$50,000 per year off the farm with no investment, why would anybody spend \$200,000 to \$300,000 to buy a farm to make \$20,000 and work 365 day a year?
63. Our ditching program in the Town of Royalton is a disaster. I wish Royalton could take a lesson from the Town of Hartland. Main stream ditches haven't been cleaned for at least 25 years or more.
64. All levels of New York State government need to be more proactive in the field with the farmer. Best example: Draining ditches, both large ones through properties and roadside. It used to be, about 25 years ago and more, that roadside ditches were cleaned very regularly and assisted basic draining for roadside fields, yards, etc. Today, you must request it, and while service is exceptional once you request it, why

the change in scheduling? Elected officials should get into the fields with the farmers once in a while to see the real picture.

- 65. One of the big problems in Niagara County is the zoning laws. They have these zoning laws for a certain amount of frontage before you can sell lots, then it goes before the zoning board of appeals, and it is approve anyway. I know this has happened in my neighborhood. Houses have been built on lots that don't have the proper amount of frontage but they ok it anyway. I think in rural areas there should be at least 150' frontage before a house can be built, and enforce that zoning. The biggest danger of loss of farmland is strip housing development. If this practice keep up, farming in Niagara County will be gone in the future. There should be zoning laws to protect farming, instead of these town boards trying to make Niagara County into another Amherst.**
- 66. Public water is a great asset to our operation. We need commercial rates for agriculture usage. Pond construction should be encouraged to promote irrigation or improve farmland drainage. Cost sharing for tile and surface drainage should be visited. Initial cost is high but if done right it promotes 100s of years of successful operation. Property taxes are a very real burden that impacts agriculture unfairly.**
- 67. One of the biggest problems in this town (Cambria) is drainage. When ditching is requested, you have a three to five year wait before any action is taken and the State does not want to do any drainage work.**

AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT SPECIALIST (WAYNE COUNTY)

DISTINGUISHING FEATURES OF THE CLASS: This is complex and specialized work involving responsibility to assist in the organization and implementation of programs to attract the interest of agricultural industries, preserve the existing agricultural industry and developing new and innovative agricultural initiatives aimed at restoring economic vitality to the agricultural community. Employees in this class are responsible for database development and analysis, identification of financial resources, development and implementation of marketing strategies, preparation of grant packages, site selection for new agriculturally related industries and independent communication with the farming community in general. General supervision is received from the Director of Planning and the Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board, with wide leeway allowed for making independent judgment regarding order of tasks and priorities.

EXAMPLES OF WORK: (ILLUSTRATIVE ONLY)

Networks with various governmental, economic and agricultural organizations promote teamwork, expand resources and maximize effectiveness.

Provides resources and referrals to individuals and/or groups of farmers to improve and enhance the viability of their farms through better marketing, diversification, niche marketing, direct marketing, value-added enterprises and the development of cooperatives.

Serves as a resource to the Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board in carrying out the various aspects of the Farmland Protection Plan.

Through education, increases landowners, county and local government officials awareness of land use tools to retain viable agricultural land including, but not limited to, purchase of development rights and transfer of development rights.

Represents the agricultural industry on various economic development committees or task forces relevant to issues such as business retention and revitalization, attraction of new business, workforce preparation, competitiveness, promotion of new technology or quality of life.

Works with various governmental and economic development agencies to become familiar with financial resources, including grants and loans to secure necessary capital for the production, marketing and processing of agricultural products.

Promotes the positive image of the agricultural industry through a variety of media efforts, including newspapers, videos and public speaking opportunities.

continued

Agricultural Development Specialist - continued

Communicates the advantages of agriculturally based industries to commercial ag brokers, industrial brokers and real estate brokers.

Represents agricultural industry to local restaurateurs, hoteliers, industries, and schools, local and state government institutions to encourage them to purchase locally grown and processed products.

Develops a long-term strategic plan to sustain agricultural economic development.

Promotes and enhances the concept of agricultural education/careers in schools and BOCES, in conjunction with existing and future educational efforts.

REQUIRED KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND ABILITIES: Good knowledge of the principles, practices and techniques of agricultural economics, particularly related to production and processing; good knowledge of agricultural education programs and land resources; familiar with agricultural legislation and other related local, state and federal agricultural issues and initiatives; working knowledge of government regulatory policies and practices related to agriculture and agribusiness; ability to communicate clearly and effectively orally and in writing; ability to work with limited supervision; knowledge of computer application involving work processing, spreadsheets and database management; ability to work well with a diverse public, especially producers and consumers; good public speaking; physical condition commensurate with the demands of the position.

ACCEPTABLE TRAINING AND EXPERIENCE: Graduation from high school and either:

- A. Graduation from a regionally accredited or New York State registered college or university with a Bachelor's Degree with specialization in the areas of agriculture, economics, marketing, public policy or a related field and three years experience with public or private sector agriculture, agribusiness or the agricultural industry; OR
- B. Graduation from a regionally accredited or New York State registered college or university with a Master's Degree with specialization in the areas of agriculture, economics, marketing public policy or a related field and two years experience with public or private sector agriculture, agribusiness or the agricultural industry; OR
- C. An equivalent combination of training and experience.

Approved and adopted 1/27/98

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NYS Food Venture Center

ORIGIN

The NYS Food Venture Center (FVC), a program of the Cornell Department of Food Science and Technology, was officially opened in the fall of 1988. The Food Venture Center offers guidance to parties seeking to introduce new food products and processes to the marketplace. It was formed as a joint activity of Cornell's Department of Food Science and Technology and the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets. Support and participation from the Department of Agriculture and Markets was not continued because of state financial cutbacks. Cornell continues to support the program and has expanded its role in outreach to new food processors.

MISSION

The mission of this program is to promote the establishment of new food processing concerns in New York State and the region by facilitating technology transfer, establishing an understanding of the requirements of safe food processing, encouraging successful business planning, and guiding parties through licensing and permit procedures.

The services include library and literature searches, laboratory analyses, and pilot plant development. A primary function is to serve as a processing authority to review proposed procedures that can be submitted to the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets for issuance of a license to operate. The Food Venture Center will provide assistance in meeting state and federal regulations for safe and properly labeled food products. The Center helps companies negotiate a maze of regulations and licensing requirements, often spelling the difference between economic success and failure. In cooperation with faculty and staff of the Department of Agricultural, Resource, and Managerial Economics, support will be provided in the areas of business planning from concept, to venture capital, on to a mature company.

TARGET AUDIENCE

The primary target audience for this program are venture capitalists and entrepreneurs who have product concepts and who need assistance in technology transfer and the establishment of a food processing company.

FUNDING SOURCE

Major funding is received by Cornell University and the New York State Agricultural Experiment Station in the form of staff support. Operating funds are acquired from companies, entrepreneurs, and venture capitalists working with the Food Venture Center.

STAFF

The FVC has two full-time staff support positions. The director of the program is a senior extension associate, Dr. Olga Padilla-Zakour. The director is responsible as a process authority for all decisions regarding the safety of processes submitted to the FVC for review. The FVC also has a support specialist. The Center is administered by the chairman of Food Science and Technology who acts as its executive director.

LOCATION

The NYS Food Venture Center is located in the Department of Food Science and Technology at the NYS Agricultural Experiment Station in Geneva, New York.

AIDER is a process with two active local leadership groups:

- Task Force – made up of community volunteers who set policy, recruit volunteers, solicit community support, participate in firm visits and prioritize, implement, and track progress of projects.
- Leadership Team – consists of 3-4 community leaders who provide media related, volunteer visitor, business relations and overall meeting coordination.

Contact

Maureen Maloney Robb
Agricultural Economic
Development Extension Associate
470 E. Lake Road
Penn Yan, NY 14527
315/536-7444

Mission

The Cornell Cooperative Extension educational system enables people to improve their lives and communities through partnerships that put experience and research knowledge to work.

AGRICULTURAL

INDUSTRY

DEVELOPMENT

ENHANCEMENT

&

RETENTION

GOAL

To integrate agriculture into comprehensive economic development strategies.

Overview

AIDER is a community-based program with an overall goal of integrating agriculture into comprehensive economic development strategies. The program first identifies the concerns and barriers to local agriculturally based firms' vitality via a survey, and then empowers teams to develop strategies to encourage their growth in that larger context. The AIDER structure includes firm visits, immediate follow-up, action planning, and then an implementation phase to achieve identified goals.

AIDER is an inclusive effort to strengthen the survival of a community's agriculturally related firms. This includes farms, agribusinesses, and ag businesses focused on retailing and marketing. Implementation teams might address: technical training, business management seminars, identification of local sources of inputs, value added and new market opportunities, reduced costs and improved quality of local services, work force quality issues, and retention of youth in the community.

Main Players

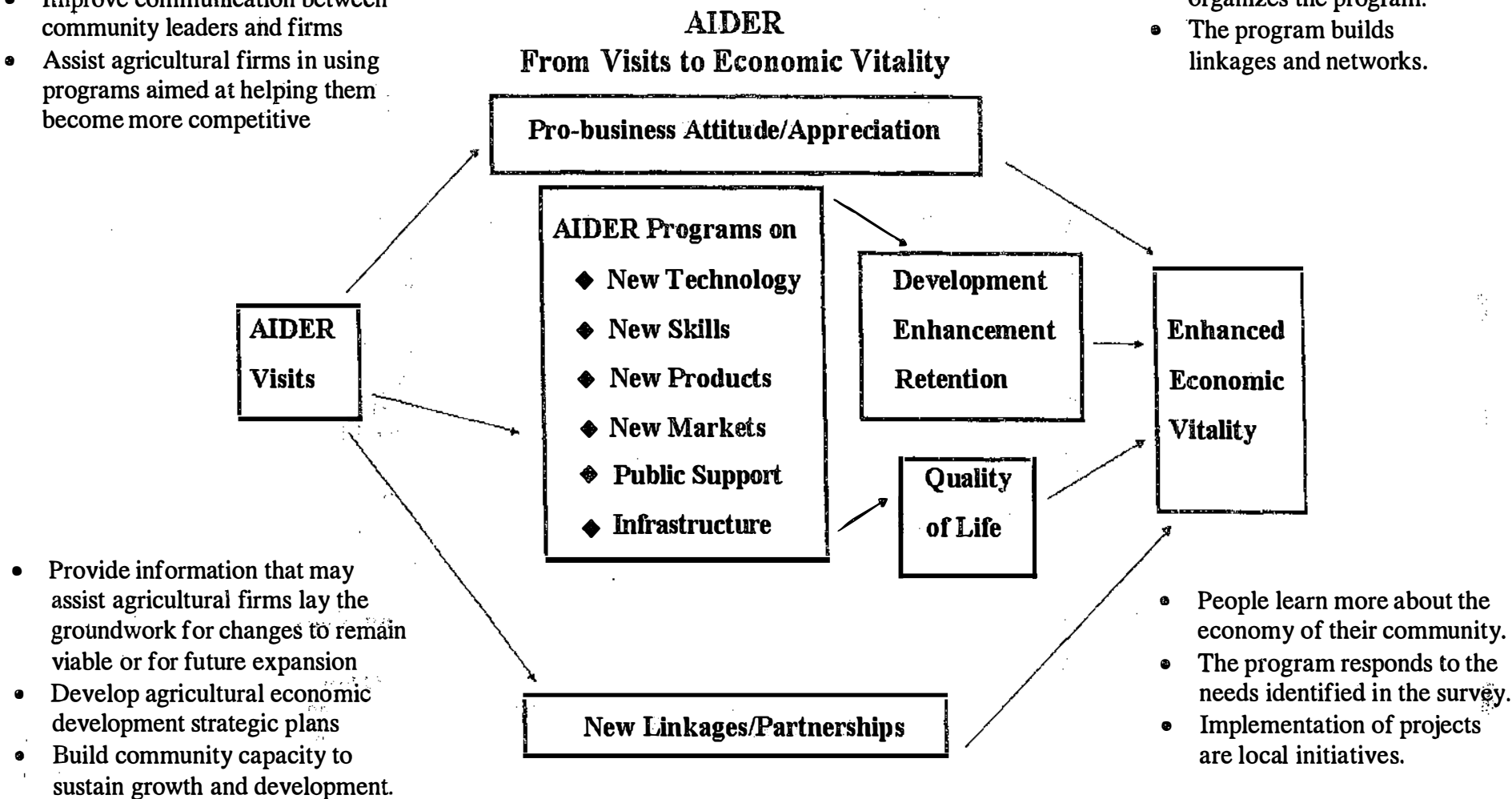
In addition to the Leadership Team, the Task Force, and the Firm Visitation Teams, there is a Cornell University Team that supports the Leadership Team Coordinators, analyzes the data and provides assistance in writing the final report.

AIDER Goals:

- Demonstrate to local agriculturally related firms that the community appreciates their contributions to the economy
- Improve communication between community leaders and firms
- Assist agricultural firms in using programs aimed at helping them become more competitive

AIDER Visitation Programs are Community Agricultural Economic Development Programs:

- The community plans and organizes the program.
- The program builds linkages and networks.



Text of law should be given as amended. Do not include matter being eliminated and do not use italics or underlining to indicate new matter.

XXXXXX

XXXX

Town

XXXXXX

of Royalton

Local Law No. 1 of the year 19 93

A local law known as The Right to Farm Law of the Town of Royalton
(Insert Title)

Be it enacted by the Town Board of the
(Name of Legislative Body)

XXXXXX

XXXX

Town

XXXXXX

of Royalton as follows:

Section 1. Statement of Legislative Finding and Intent.

(A) It is hereby found and declared by the Town Board of the Town of Royalton that agricultural lands are irreplaceable assets. To that end, the Town Board finds farming to be an essential activity within the Town which greatly contributes to the economic viability of the Town. Farming also reinforces the special quality of life enjoyed by the Town's residents, provides the visual benefit of open space and generates economic benefits and social well-being within the community. Therefore, the Town Board emphasizes to both the Town's current residents and prospective newcomers to the Town that it is the policy of this Town to conserve, protect and encourage the development and improvement of agricultural land for the production of food, and other products, and also for its natural and ecological value.

(B) Furthermore, the Town Board hereby supports those farmers, as well as all those employed, retained or otherwise authorized to act on behalf of farmers, in their efforts to lawfully and responsibly engage in the time honored profession of farming. The Town Board hereby expresses its support of the enactment by the State Legislature of Chapter 797 of the Laws of 1992 of the State of New York which, among other things, added a new section to the Agriculture and Markets Law of the State of New York by establishing for the first time a statutory Right to Farm by prohibiting the commencement of private nuisance suits against farmers who engage in sound agricultural practices.

(If additional space is needed, attach pages the same size as this sheet, and number each.)

(1)

(C) The Town Board, in an effort to promote and foster a harmonious relationship between the residents of the Town and those who contemplate purchasing land within the Town of Royalton, and to conserve, protect and encourage the development and improvement of agricultural land for the production of food and other products, hereby declares that it shall be the policy of this Town to provide reasonable notice to prospective landowners that farming activities may occur on neighboring lands.

Section 2. Notice to Prospective Grantees.

(A)(1) Upon the submission of a preliminary subdivision plat to the Planning Board of the Town of Royalton, pursuant to Article 16 of the Town Law of the State of New York, and the applicable subdivision regulations of the Town, the applicant, in addition to any other requirements, shall submit a separate statement to the Planning Board stating whether the boundaries of the proposed subdivision are to be located partially, wholly or within 500 feet of either an Agricultural District or land for which an individual commitment has been received pursuant to Section 305 or 306 of the Agriculture and Markets Law of the State of New York.

(2) Upon submission of any application for a building permit for a multi-family residence, the applicant, in addition to any other requirements, shall submit a statement to the building inspector stating whether any portion of the proposed multi-family residential dwelling premises is to be located partially, wholly or within 500 feet of either an Agricultural District or land for which an individual commitment has been received pursuant to Section 305 or 306 of the Agriculture and Markets Law of the State of New York.

(B) Should any proposed subdivision or multi-family residence be located partially, wholly or within 500 feet of either an Agricultural District or land for which an individual commitment has been received pursuant to Section 305 or 306 of the Agriculture and Markets Law of the State of New York, then the following notice shall appear on the final subdivision plat or, in the case of a multi-family residential dwelling, on the building permit:

"It is the policy of this State and the Town of Royalton to conserve, protect and encourage the development and improvement of agricultural land for the production of food, and other products, and also for its natural ecological value. This notice is to inform prospective residents that the property

they are about to acquire lies partially or wholly in, or within 500 feet of, either an agricultural district or land for which an individual commitment has been received pursuant to Section 305 or 306 of the Agriculture and Markets Law of the State of New York, and that farming activities occur in such district or land. Such farming activities may include, but not be limited to, activities that cause noise, dust and odors."

(C) In addition to the requirements of paragraph B of Section 2 of this local law, it shall be required as a condition of final subdivision approval, or, in the case of a building permit for a multi-family residence as a condition of such issuance, that prior to the initial sale, purchase or exchange of any real property within any such subdivision or multi-family residence premises, the grantor shall also deliver to the prospective grantee a typewritten document containing the notice set forth in Section 2(B). Further, grantor shall incorporate said notice in any deeds wherein title to any such property is to be initially conveyed to a grantee.

Section 3. Severability. Each separate provision of this local law shall be deemed independent of all other provisions herein, and if any provision shall be deemed or declared invalid, all other provisions hereof shall remain valid and enforceable.

Section 4. Effective Date. This local law shall take effect upon filing as required by law.

Niagara County Soils and Classification

P SYMBOL	MAPPING UNITS	CAPABILITY GROUPS	PRIME FARMLAND	NEW YORK AG & MKTS	APPROXIMATE	PERCENT
	% slope	USDA-NRCS (1)	USDA-NRCS (2)	AGRICULTURAL LAND CLASSIFICATION (3)	ACRES IN COUNTY (4)	OF COUNTY (4)
	Alluvial land	5W		9	363	0.1
	Altmar loamy find sand	2W		4	866	0.2
	Altmar gravelly/loam 0-3	2w		4	1327	0.4
A	Appleton gravelly loam 0-3	3w	2	5	14463	4.2
A	Appleton silt loam 0-6	3w	2	5	15387	4.5
B	Arkport very find sandy loam 0-6	3w	1	2	865	0.2
C	Arkport very find sandy loam 6-12	3e		4	414	0.1
A	Arkport fine sandy loam 0-2	2s grvl sub	1	2	703	0.2
B	Arkport fine sandy loam 2-6	2s grvl sub	1	2	480	0.1
A	Bombay fine sandy loam 0-2	2w	1	2	820	0.2
B	Bombay fine sandy loam 2-6	2e	1	2	448	0.1
A	Brockport silt loam 0-4	3w		5	531	0.2
	Canandaigua silt loam	3w		7	10132	3
	Canandaigua silty clay loam	3w		7	3931	1.2
A	Cayuga&Cazenovia silt loam 0-2	2w	1	3	618	0.2
B	Cayuga&Cazenovia silt loam 2-6	2e	1	3	3415	1
C	Cayuga&Cazenovia silt loam 6-12	3e		5	436	0.1
A	Cazenovia gravelly silt loam 0-3	2w	1	3	187	0.1
B	Cazenovia gravelly silt loam 3-8	2e	1	3	313	0.1
A	Cazenovia gravelly silt loam	2w shale sub	1	4	696	0.2
B	Cazenovia gravelly silt loam	2w shale sub	1	4	326	0.1
	Cheektowaga fine sandy loam	3w	2	7	616	0.2
A	Churchville silt loam 0-6	3w		5	8003	2.4
B	Churchville silt loam 2-6	3w		5	382	0.1
nA	Claverack loam fine sand 0-2	2w	1	3	3051	0.9
A	Collamer silt loam 0-2	2w	1	3	2828	0.8
B	Collamer silt loam 2-6	2w	1	3	3938	1.2
B	Colonie loamy fine sand 0-6	3s	1	4	6130	1.8
	Cosad fine sandy loam	3w	2	4	752	0.2
	Cutanel fill land			9	2473	0.7
B	Dunkirk silt loam 2-6	2e	1	2	883	0.3
CS	Dunkirk silt loam 6-12	4e ER		5	724	0.2
D3	Dunkirk and Arkport soils 12-20	6e ER		6	427	0.1
A	Einora loamy fine sand 0-2	2w	1	4	2793	0.8

Farmland Protection--A Plan For Niagara County

Niagara County Soils and Classification						
SYMBOL	MAPPING UNITS	CAPABILITY GROUPS	PRIME FARMLAND	NEW YORK AG & MKTS	APPROXIMATE	PERCENT
	% slope	USDA-NRCS (1)	USDA-NRCS (2)	AGRICULTURAL LAND CLASSIFICATION (3)	ACRES IN COUNTY (4)	OF COUNTY (4)
	Elnora loam fine sand 0-2	2w	1	4	1,533	0.4
A	Farmington silt loam 0-8	3s		6	777	0.2
	Fondmusley silt loam 0-8	4w		7	2,830	0.8
	Fredon gravelly loam	3w		6	3,019	0.9
A	Galen very fine sandy loam 0-2	2w	1	2	2,354	0.7
B	Galen very fine sandy loam 2-6	2w	1	3	1,681	0.5
	Hamlin silt loam	2w	1	Hamlin generally not farmable located in creekbeds, etc	3,336	1
H	Hilton gravelly loam 0-3	2w	1	2	7,503	2.2
B	Hilton gravelly loam 3-8	2e	1	2	2,754	0.8
A	Hilton silt loam 0-3	2w	1	2	8,362	
B	Hilton silt loam 3-8	2e	1	2	6,499	1.9
A	Hilton & Cayuga silt loam 0-3	2w limestone substratum	1	2	2,586	0.8
B	Hilton & Cayuga silt loam 3-8	2e	1	3	846	0.2
A	Howard gravelly loam 0-3	2s	1	2	1,633	0.5
B	Howard gravelly loam 3-8	2s	1	2	1,986	0.6
C	Howard gravelly loam 8-15	3e		5	147	<0.05
B	Hudson silt loam 2-6	2e		3	3,024	0.9
C3	Hudson silt clay loam 6-12	4e ER		5	299	0.1
F3	Hudson soils 20-45	6e ER		9	195	0.1
B	Lairdsville silt loam 0-6	2e		4	525	0.2
	Lakemont silty clay loam	4w		6	12,870	3.8
	Lamson very fine sandy loam	3w	2	7	1,554	0.5
	Lamson very fine sandy loam	3w grvi sub	2	7	961	0.3
	Lockport silt loam	3w		5	7,292	2.1
	Madelin silt loam	4w		7	9,750	2.9
	Massena fine sandy loam	3w	2	5	2,293	0.7
1	Minoa very fine sandy loam	3w	2	5	5,965	1.8
s	Muck, shallow	4w		6 drained	1,121	0.3
s	Muck, shallow	4w		10 undrained		
A	Niagara silt loam 0-2	3w	2	4	10,050	3
B	Niagara silt loam 2-6	3w	2	4	268	0.1
A	Odessa silty clay loam 0-2	3w	2	4	23,852	7
B	Odessa silty clay loam 2-6	3w		5	1,574	0.5
B	Ontario loam 2-8	2e	1	2	3,338	1.0

Niagara County Soils and Classification

MAP SYMBOL	MAPPING UNITS	CAPABILITY GROUPS	PRIME FARMLAND	NEW YORK AG & MKTS	APPROXIMATE	PERCENT
	% slope	USDA-NRCS *1	USDA-NRCS *2	AGRICULTURAL LAND CLASSIFICATION *3	ACRES IN COUNTY *4	OF COUNTY *4
nC	Ontario loam 8-15	3e		2	461	1
nC3	Ontario loam 8-15 eroded	4e		5	251	0.1
nD3	Ontario loam 15-30	6e		8	294	0.1
oA	Ontario loam 0-3	1 limestone substratum	1	2	748	0.2
oB	Ontario loam 3-8	2 limestone substratum	1	3	758	0.2
oSA	Otisville gravelly sandy loam 0-3	3s		5	768	0.2
oSB	Otisville gravelly sandy loam 3-8	3s		5	1,414	0.4
ovA	Ovid silt loam 0-2	3w	2	5	20,180	5.9
ovB	Ovid silt loam 2-6	3w	2	5	3,874	1.1
owA	Ovid silt loam 0-3	3w limestone substratum	2	5	883	0.3
owB	Ovid silt loam 3-8	3w limestone substratum	2	5	236	0.1
oSA	Phelps gravelly loam 0-5	2w	1	2	4,158	1.2
oAa	Raynhan silt loam 0-2	3w	2	6	8,343	2.4
oAb	Raynhan silt loam 2-6	3w	2	5	666	0.2
oBa	Rhinebeck silt loam 0-2	3w	2	5	21,246	6.2
oBb	Rhinebeck silt loam 2-6	3w	2	5	1,750	0.5
oBa	Rhinebeck silty clay loam 0-2	3w sandy substratum	2	5	5,125	1.5
oBb	Rhinebeck silty clay loam 2-6	3w sandy substratum	2	5	245	0.1
oBk	Rhinebeck silt loam	3w Th sur var	2	5	1,082	0.3
oAa	Rockand, nearly level	8s		9	517	0.2
oAf	Rockand, steep	8s		9	1,002	0.3
oBb	Schoharie silty clay loam 2-6	2e		3	856	0.2
oBt	Stafford loamy fine sand	3w		5	602	0.2
oBu	Stafford loamy fine sand	3w gravel substratum		5	1,577	0.5
oBw	Sun silt loam	4w		7	7,669	2.2
oBa	Wayland silt loam	3w		8	2,776	0.8
SOIL MAPPED ACREAGE TOTAL			319,947	*1 see USDA "General Soil Map"		
Urban--not mapped (in 1972)			9,218	*2 1-prime farmland; 2-prime if drained		
Pits & Quarries			805	*3 New York Agricultural Land Classification and local arbitrary assignment of soils is: Groups 1-4 prime; 5-7 farmable; 8-10 non-farmable		
Indian Reservation not mapped			6,335	*4 Source: United States Department of Agriculture Soil Conservation Service in cooperation with Cornell University Agricultural Experiment station, Oct. 1972		
NYS Power Authority Res.			1,910	Soil Survey of Niagara County, New York		
Water area <40 acres			2,905			
Total=			341,120			
Niagara County Dept of Public Works lists County acreage as:			339,571			

FOOTNOTE (1):

Capability groupings—United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) (formerly Soil Conservation Service (SCS)).

CAPABILITY GROUP OF SOILS

The capability classification is a grouping of soils that shows in a general way how suitable the soils are for most kinds of farming. The grouping is based on limitation of the soil, the risk of damage when they are used, and the way they respond to treatment.

Class 1	Soils with few limitations.
Class 2	Soils with some limitations that reduce the choice of plants, or require moderate conservation practices.
Class 3	Soils with severe limitations that reduce the choice of plants, or require special conservation practices, or both.
Class 4	Soils with very severe limitations that restrict the choice of plants, require special conservation practices with careful management, or both
Class 5	Soils with limitations impractical to remove without major reclamation. Use limited largely to pasture, woodland or wildlife.
Class 6	Soils with very severe limitations that make them generally unsuited for cultivation. Generally suited to pasture, woodland or wildlife.
Class 7	Soils with extreme limitations. Restricted to woodland, wildlife, or specially managed pasture.
Class 8	Soils and land forms that are suited only for wildlife, recreation, water supply, or esthetic purposes.

Small letters:

- e = main limitation is erosion unless close-growing ground cover is maintained.
- w = water is or on the soil interfaces with plant growth or cultivation.
Drainage may improve.
- s = the soil is limited mainly because it is shallow, droughty or stony

Shale Sub = shale substratum
ER = eroded
LMY Sub = loamy substratum
LMSTN Sub = limestone substratum
SNDY Sub = sandy substratum
TH SUR VAR = think surface variant
GRVL SUB = gravel substratum

FOOTNOTE (2):

1 = all areas are prime farmland
2 = only drained areas are prime farmland
blank = not prime farmland

Definitions

Prime Farmland: United State Department of Agriculture (USDA), Natural Resource Conservation (NRCS) (formerly SCS) USD

Prime farmland is land best suited for producing food, feed, forage, fiber, and oilseed crops, and also available for these uses (the land could be presently cropland, pastureland, forest land, or other land but not urban land or water). It has the soil quality, growing season, and moisture supply needed to produce sustained high yields of crops economically when treated and managed, including water management, according to modern farming methods.

The detailed national criteria for identifying prime farmland is printed in the Federal Register of January 31, 1978.

The following criteria apply to New York:

1. The soils have an adequate moisture supply. Included are:
 - a) Soils that have well distributed rainfall or have enough rain in summer that the amount of stored moisture plus rainfall is approximately equal to or exceeds the amount of potential evapotranspiration. Water moves through the soil at some time in most years.
 - b) Soils having sufficient available water capacity within a depth of 40 inches (1 meter), or in the root zone if the root zone is less than 40 inches deep, to produce the commonly grown crops in 7 or more years out of 10.

2. The soils have a soil temperature regime that is suitable for plant growth. These are soils that, at a depth of 20 inches (50 cm), have a mean annual temperature higher than 32° F (0° C). In addition, the mean summer temperature at this depth in soils with an O (organic) horizon is higher than 47° F (8° C); in soils that have no O horizon the mean summer temperature is higher than 59° F (15° C).
3. The soils have a pH between 4.5 and 8.4 in all horizons within a depth of 40 inches (1 meter) or in the root zone if the root zone is less than 40 inches deep. This range of pH is favorable for growing a wide variety of crops without adding large amounts of soil amendments.
4. The soils have no water table or a water table that is maintained at a sufficient depth during the cropping season to allow crops common to the area to be grown.
5. The soils are not flooded frequently during the growing season (less often than once in two years).
6. The soils have a product of K (erodibility factor) x percent slope of less than 2.0. That is, prime farmland does not include soils having a serious erosion hazard.
7. The soils have a permeability rate of at least 0.06 inches (0.15 cm) per hour in the upper 20 inches (50 cm) and the mean annual soil temperature at a depth of 20 inches (50 cm) is less than 59° F (15° C).
8. Less than 10 percent of the surface layer in these soils consist of rock fragments larger than 3 inches (7.6 cm). These soils present no particular difficulty in cultivating with equipment.

Unique Farmland

Unique farmland is land other than prime farmland that is used for the production of specific high-value food crops. It has the special combination of soil quality, location, growing season, and moisture supply needed to produce sustained high quality and/or high yields of a specific crop when treated and managed according to modern farming methods. Examples of such crops are grapes, fruit, and vegetables.

Unique farmland has the following characteristics:

1. It is used for specific high-value food crop.
2. It has moisture supply that is adequate for the specific crop. The supply is from stored moisture, precipitation, or a developed irrigation system.

3. It has the combination of favorable factors of soil quality, growing season, temperature, humidity, air drainage, elevation, aspect, or other conditions, such as nearness to market that favor the growth of a specific good crop.

Land that qualifies as prime farmland but is used for specific high value crops is shown on the map as prime farmland.

Additional Farmland of Statewide Importance

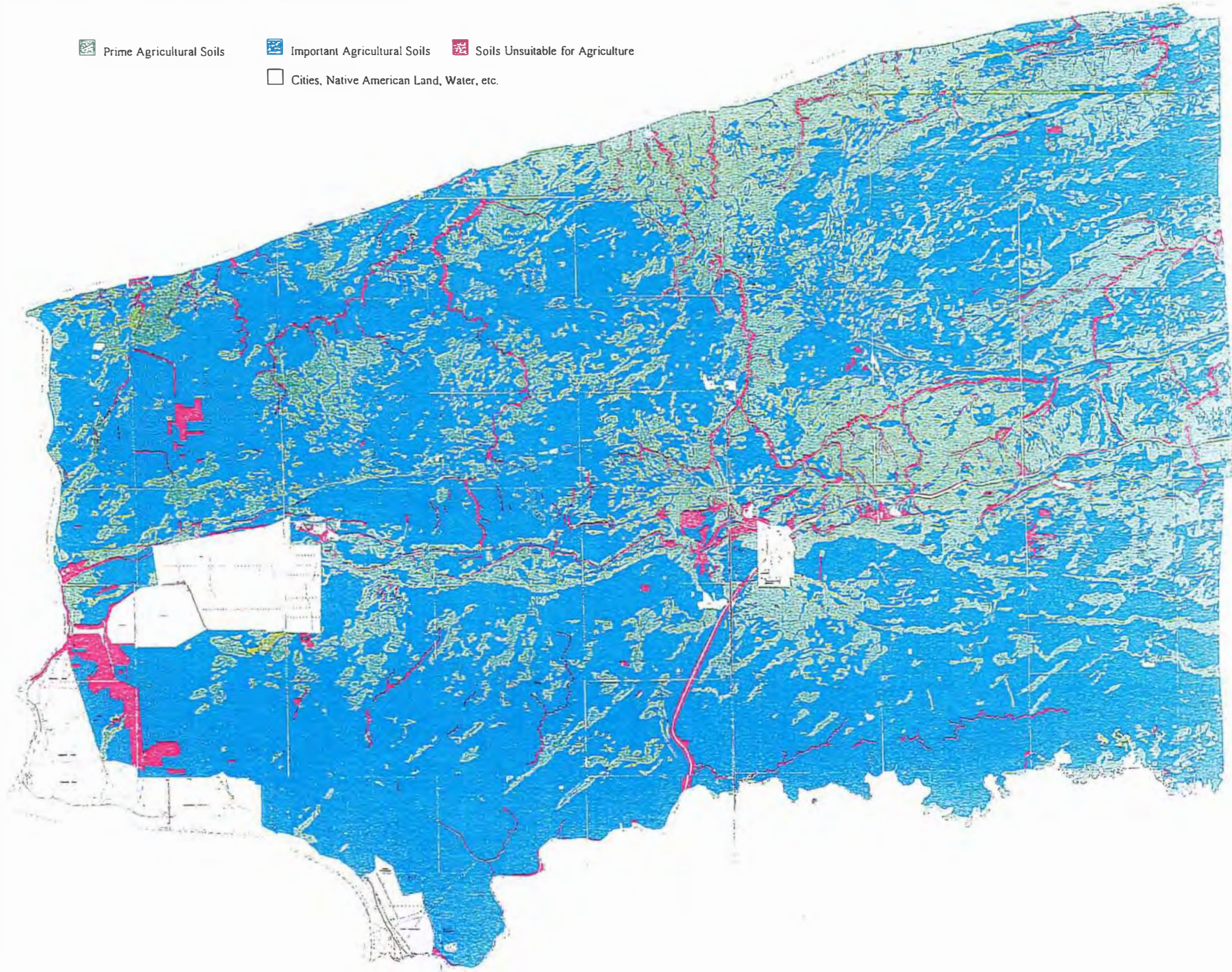
This is land, in addition to prime and unique farmland, that is of statewide importance for the production of crops. It is important to agriculture in New York, yet exhibits some soil properties that do not meet prime farmland criteria. Examples of such properties are season wetness, erodibility, limited rooting zone, flooding, or droughtiness. These soils can be farmed satisfactorily by greater inputs of fertilizer and soil amendments, drainage improvement, erosion control practices or flood protection. These soils are nearly level to sloping and range in slope gradient from 0-15 percent. They can be cultivated with modern farm machinery. Normal tillage practices are not hindered by excess stones. These soils produce fair to good crop yields when managed properly. Grouping 1 denotes that all areas are prime farmland. Grouping 2 denotes that only drained areas are prime farmland.

FOOTNOTE (3):

New York State Agriculture and Markets law Article 25AA section 304.a(2)a: "The commissioner of agriculture and markets shall establish and maintain an agricultural land classification system based upon soil productivity and capability...These shall be ten primary groups of mineral soils..."

Agricultural Soils in Niagara County

- Prime Agricultural Soils
- Important Agricultural Soils
- Soils Unsuitable for Agriculture
- Cities, Native American Land, Water, etc.



COST OF COMMUNITY SERVICES STUDY

TOWN OF WILSON, NIAGARA COUNTY

Prepared by

**Cornell Cooperative Extension, Niagara County
as part of the Niagara County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan**

**funded by the
Niagara County Legislature
and
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January, 1999

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INTRODUCTION

Niagara County is experiencing a redistribution of population as more and more people achieve the dream of owning rural property where large lots are affordable and urban problems are avoided. Between 1990 and 1996, the population of the Town of Wilson grew 3.6% (Empire State Development est.) which offset a decline of 1.7% in the previous decade (Bureau of the Census). Population projections by URS Greiner Consultants, Inc. are for a 239-person increase between 1990 and 2020. Rural character is still dominant in Wilson but build-up along rural roads is more and more evident.

Growth in real property value creates additional tax revenues for the Town of Wilson. However, some types of development also require significant increases in the demand for local services. These increases may not be seen as “town-related” even though the taxpayer reaches into the same pocket to pay, for example, school taxes for increased school capacity due to more homes. Rural towns continue their tradition of prudent and often frugal management of town services but eventually a threshold is reached where the demand for services, similar to more urban environments, starts to accelerate. Quality roads, snow removal, police forces, youth recreation and garbage are but a few of the services that are demanded at a higher level as a township builds up. To fully appreciate the costs and benefits relative to increased development, it is important to compare revenue generated by each major land use in a community with corresponding expenditure allocated to each use. This analysis may reveal a far different view of the relative value of a given land use than most people would think.

In 1997, Cornell Cooperative Extension, Niagara County sub-contacted an agriculture and farmland protection plan study for Niagara County utilizing a grant from New York State Agriculture and Markets and from the County of Niagara. Included in the proposal was the agreement to conduct a community cost of services (COCS) study for a Niagara County township. Comparative outcomes for a number of studies done at various locations in the United States by a number of organizations are included at the end of this publication. The results of a cost of community services study done for the nearby, densely populated Town of Amherst are also shown.

A SPECIAL NOTE TO THE READER

COCs studies are sometimes felt to have an inherent bias as part of the agenda of the organization doing the study. The various studies cited on page 11 produce various results but similar relationships. Not all are by agricultural land protection- or business-advocacy organizations and still certain patterns are evident across the studies.

The American Farmland Trust states in Is Farmland Protection A Community Investment? How to Do a Cost of Community Services Study: “...one type of land use is not intrinsically better than another. Communities should not blindly pursue either a conservation or a growth management agenda. Planning decisions must be community based and reflect local goals and opportunities. However, in the past, slighting the economic importance of farms and forestlands has meant these precious natural resources have consistently been sacrificed to their ‘highest and best’ use, forever altering the local landscape and weakening the local potential of resource-based economic development. And while commercial/industrial growth offers a potential balance, it is not a miracle cure, either. What happens when local skills are not available to fill the jobs created by new business? Will new houses be needed for the people who move to town to take the new jobs? Will the cycle continue?”

This is why it is so important for communities to see the full picture of their land uses. Disclosing the *net* contribution of farm, forest and open lands can help local leaders overcome the notion that natural resources *must* be converted to other uses to ensure economic stability. At the least, they should help dispel the myths that residential development lowers taxes, or that use-assessment programs give landowners an unfair tax break.

Even with due consideration of their multiple economic and environmental benefits, farm and forestlands will continue to be threatened by conversion to higher tax-generating uses. That is why local decision-makers must weigh all of the advantages that farm and forestlands have to offer in the planning, zoning and public policy process. Supporting farmland protection and conversion can prove to be a sound community investment.”
(p.19)

METHODS

A copy of the Town of Wilson Budget reflecting the 1997 Actual Revenues and Expenditures was obtained. Given that the General Fund and Highway are paid for in part and services provided to the Village of Wilson, the taxable shares (town and village) derived from the Real Property System Cross Reference Listing enabled assignment of revenues and expenditures for these budget subsets. General Fund Out-Of-Village (OV) and Highway (OV) shares, similarly, could be calculated from the Real Property Listing. Taxable values for real property categories were readily available only for 1998 but slight shifts in budget share would not be expected to affect results of the allocation of the 1997 town actual revenues and expenditures. Headings for each revenue and expenditure line item generally correspond to the format of the Town of Wilson Budget and that recommended by the Office of the State Comptroller. Some grouping of line items from the General Fund and from the General Fund (OV) was done to save space but can be documented in a separate source book at Cornell Cooperative Extension.

Relative proportions of revenues and expenditures were assigned to three land-use categories: residential, commercial/industrial and agricultural/vacant. Lands listed as residential, vacant residential, apartments and condominiums were treated as residential. Lands listed as commercial, industrial, communication, etc. were treated as commercial/industrial. Lands listed as agricultural, vacant and open lands were of course treated as agricultural/vacant. A separate source book is available at Cornell Cooperative Extension showing all taxable properties grouped by class code and assignment to one of three land-use groups. A more refined effort could have separated the residential share of agricultural properties and the agricultural share of Class 241 (parcels with year-around, residential use with 10 or more acres of land in agricultural use).

Approximately 22% of Town revenues are derived from town and special district taxes while about 12% are from revenue sharing of local sales taxes. Other sources are fees, State assistance and interest and earnings.

Allocation of revenues or appropriations (expenditures) by taxable value share was often the only basis for assignment to land use categories. The intent throughout was, if anything, to bias the study against agricultural/vacant uses. In reality, considerably more demand exists to keep roads snow and ice-free for commuters than any real need by farm enterprises even though land use, taxable value share was the method used for assignment. Similarly, ditching programs, which do benefit farms, also enhance roadside water movement in this very level township. An examination of the assignment of budget shares in Table 2 shows no weighting of snow removal away from agriculture and assigns all the benefits of drainage to agriculture.

The dollar amount of some revenue/expenditure items was quite small such that it was not seen important to determine if, for example, hunting licenses are strictly residential recreation or beneficial to fruit and vegetable farms where a high deer population is harmful to crops. It was presumed that vacant parcels did not have need for garbage service and so the cost of this service was divided by share of parcel numbers present for each of the other land uses. There are, undoubtedly, some non-users of garbage services who own some of these parcels as well but at least the weighting is shifted away from the vacant class.

Allocating town expenditures by land use proved more difficult and relies on interviews with local officials – including fire chiefs. The rationale for allocating the fire budgets is found on page 12. As with revenue allocation, some appropriations (expenditures) were fairly easy to allocate by their very nature. The school taxes are assigned totally to the residential sector. This is consistent with the methodology of all other COCS the writer has seen. It makes no assumptions about the value of schools to all of society nor judgement about the cost of these types of services.

RESULTS

Total revenues and appropriations for each land use category were used to calculate ratios of revenues to expenditures. To contrast this rural township with a more heavily-populated one, the results of the "Cost of Services/Revenues Generated Land Use Study," done in March, 1992 on the Town of Amherst, Erie County by Fox & Company for the Industrial Development Agency are shared. The results were as follows:

Amherst, New York

Land Use Category	Revenues	Expenditures	Ratio
Residential	\$289,489,668	\$334,458,915	1/1.16
Commercial*	68,518,783	25,924,373	1/.38
Open Space	4,388,404	2,013,567	1/.46
Total	\$362,396,855	\$362,396,855	

*Amherst grouped its small acreage of farmland under commercial

Wilson, New York

Land Use Category	Revenues	Expenditures	Ratio
Residential	\$5,392,913	\$5,947,795	1/1.10
Commercial/Industrial	504,716	148,954	1/.30
Agricultural/Vacant	460,741	261,621	1/.57
Total	\$6,358,370	\$6,358,370	

Examining these ratios as a measure of dollars received versus dollars spent says that for every dollar received from the residential sector, \$1.16 was spent in Amherst and \$1.10 in Wilson. In contrast to this for the open space sector in Amherst, only \$.46 was spent for every dollar received. The agricultural/vacant sector in Wilson received \$.57 for each Dollar of revenue from this category of land use. Commercial/industrial land uses continue to yield very favorable ratios in these studies and others shown in Table 3.

Agricultural land use transition to irreversible uses is often hastened by its availability during times of economic adversity for farmers. Intangible costs to the community and the rest of society are seldom factored in until development pressure creates a clamor for larger and more sophisticated community services. Seldom do land taxes for the farmer decline even though smaller profits on each marginal unit of production force larger and larger farm size. The tax credits available to farmers through the School Tax Reform Act are helpful to qualifying land owners but as of this date have not been measured relative to their contribution in retaining agricultural and open space land uses. Exemptions that have been available to various classes of land users are, of course, accounted for by the use of "taxable values" in Table 1. Municipal governments will benefit from discussion of sustainable development through meetings of the Association of Towns and locally sponsored conferences where innovations from around New York State and from the Nation are examined.

Table 2

ALLOCATION OF REVENUES AND EXPENSES - TOWN OF WILSON, NIAGARA COUNTY 1997

GENERAL FUND (TOWN AND VILLAGE)	RESIDENTIAL %	INDUS/COM'L %	AGR/V'CENT	%	TOTAL \$
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APPROPRIATIONS

General Government

Planning, Admin. & Finance	109329	84.3	10763	8.3	9669	7.5	129761
Tax Collection and Assess.*	35763	70.3	1381	2.7	13712	27.0	50856
Legal	6735	84.3	663	8.3	596	7.5	7994
Elections	4296	100.0					4296
Buildings and Supplies	39736	84.3	3912	8.3	3514	7.5	47162
Unallocated Insurance	34591	84.3	3405	8.3	3059	7.5	41055
Public Safety							
Dog Control	8853	100.0					8853
Police and Traffic	11005	100.0					11005
Transportation	58069	84.3	5717	8.3	5135	7.5	68921
Economic Assis. & Opp	8101	100.0					8101
Culture and Recreation	5201	100.0					5201
Home and Com. Svcs.	30872	100.0					30872
Undistributed	46894	84.3	4616	8.3	4147	7.5	55657
Subtotal	399445		30457		39832		469734

REVENUES

Other payments, lieu of taxes	404	84.3	40	8.3	36	7.5	480
Int & Pen Real Prop Tax	4744	84.3	467	8.3	420	7.5	5631
Non-Prop Tax (Sales Tax)	58250	84.3	5734	8.3	5152	7.5	69136
Clerk Fees	1549	84.3	152	8.3	137	7.5	1838
Dog Control Fees	133	100.0					133
Sale of Cemetery Lots	1500	100.0					1500
Chg for Cemetery Svcs	45	100.0					45
Int & Earnings	11946	84.3	1176	8.3	1056	7.5	14178
Bingo Licenses	1733	100.0					1733
Dog Licenses	11813	100.0					11813
Fines & Forfeited Bail	11741	100.0					11741
Fines & Pen Dog Cases	395	100.0					395
Unclassified Revenue	3447	84.3	339	8.3	305	7.5	4091
Mortgage Tax	45516	84.3	4481	8.3	4025	7.5	54022
Subtotal	153216		12389		11131		176736

*Allocation based upon % of all parcels

HIGHWAY FUND*		RESIDENTIAL %		COM'L/INDUS %		AGR/V/CNT %		TOTAL \$	
TOWN AND VILLAGE									
APPROPRIATIONS		335258	84.3	33004	8.3	29650	7.5	397912	
REVENUES		113696	84.3	11193	8.3	10055	7.5	134944	
HIGHWAY FUND OV		RESIDENTIAL %		COM'L/INDUS %		AGR/V/CNT %		TOTAL \$	
TOWN-OUT OF-VILLAGE									
APPROPRIATIONS		164688	84.6	12998	6.7	17047	8.8	194733	
REVENUES		167932	84.6	13254	6.7	17383	8.8	198569	
WATER FUND**		RESIDENTIAL %		COM'L/INDUS %		AGR/V/CNT %		TOTAL \$	
TOWN AND VILLAGE									
APPROPRIATIONS		381215	84.3	37528	8.3	33714	7.5	452457	
REVENUES		263323	84.3	25922	8.3	23288	7.5	312533	
FIREMAN'S RET. FUND		RESIDENTIAL %		COM'L/INDUS %		AGR/V/CNT %		TOTAL \$	
TOWN AND VILLAGE									
APPROPRIATIONS		36256	85.0	3242	7.6	3156	7.4	42654	
REVENUES		31217	85.0	2791	7.6	2718	7.4	36726	
FIRE PROTECTION		RESIDENTIAL %		COM'L/INDUS %		AGR/V/CNT %		TOTAL \$	
TOWN AND VILLAGE									
APPROPRIATIONS		177612	85.0	15793	7.6	15550	7.4	208955	
REVENUES		210976	85.0	18864	7.6	18367	7.4	248207	
STREET LIGHTING		RESIDENTIAL %		COM'L/INDUS %		AGR/V/CNT %		TOTAL \$	
TOWN AND VILLAGE									
APPROPRIATIONS		2724	100.0					2724	Sunset Is.
REVENUES		2528	84.3	249	8.3	223	7.5	3000	Sunset Is.
SUNSET IS. SEWER		RESIDENTIAL %		COM'L/INDUS %		AGR/V/CNT %		TOTAL \$	
TOWN AND VILLAGE									
APPROPRIATIONS		56381	100.0					56381	
REVENUES		5293	84.3	521	8.3	468	7.5	6282	
*Some community services studies allocate a higher % of the budget to "residential" than its taxable share would dictate because of a greater demand for snow removal by the residential sector. This study has not done that.									
**Other than the 3 dairy farms in the town and parcels where irrigation from municipal water is done, agricultural/vacant parcels would not normally need water service. This study builds in a bias against this sector because allocation is based on budget sh									

FUND BALANCE 1996	RESIDENTIAL %	COM'L/INDUS %	AGR/V'CNT %	TOTAL \$				
GENERAL FUND REVENUES	42127	84.3	4147	8.3	3726	7.5	50000	
GENERAL OV REVENUES	157125	84.6	12401	6.7	16264	8.8	185790	
HIGHWAY FUND REVENUES	33702	84.3	3318	8.3	2980	7.5	40000	
WATER DISTRICT	25748	84.3	2535	8.3	2277	7.5	30560	
Subtotal (revenue)	258702		22401		25247		306350	
RAISED BY TAXES*	RESIDENTIAL %	COM'L/INDUS %	AGR/V'CNT %	TOTAL \$				
GENERAL FUND TAX SHARE	197054	84.3	19399	8.3	17427	7.5	233880	
HIGHWAY FUND TAX SHARE	134059	84.3	13198	8.3	11855	7.5	159112	
WATER DISTRICT**	94539	84.3	9307	8.3	8360	7.5	112206	
FIRE DISTRICT #1	2250	84.3	222	8.3	199	7.5	2671	
SUNSET LIGHTING	1886	84.3	185	8.3	167	7.5	2238	
Subtotal (revenue)	429788		42311		38008		510107	
TOTAL APPROP.	1953945		148954		261621		2364520	
TOTAL REVENUE	2018097		177242		169181		2364520	
*Since \$ to be raised by taxes is based on an adopted budget for 1997 these \$ are adjusted down for the actual 1997 need.								
**If ag was charged only for those parcels with water service plus irrigation meters with v'cnt excl., this share would change.								
RATIO OF TOWN REVENUE TO EXPENDITURES BY PROPERTY CATEGORY								
	REVENUES	EXPENDITURES	RATIO (IN DOLLARS)					
RESIDENTIAL	2018097	1953945	1/.97					
COM'L/INDUSTRIAL	177242	148954	1/.84					
AGRICULTURAL/VACANT	169181	261621	1/1.55					
EDUCATION 1997-98 SCHOOL TAX LEVY (REVENUE)								
	RESIDENTIAL %	COM'L/INDUS %	AGR/V'CNT %	TOTAL \$	TAX RATE			
WILSON CENTRAL SCHOOL	3326205	84.5	322779	8.2	287353	7.3	3936337	\$20.24
NEWFAIR CENTRAL SCHOOL	48611	84.5	4695	8.2	4207	7.3	57513	\$22.20
Subtotal	3374816		327474		291560		3993850	
EXPENDITURE	3993850	100						
SUMMARY - RATIO OF TOWN AND SCHOOL REVENUE TO EXPENDITURE BY PROP. CATEGORY								
	REVENUES	EXPENDITURES	RATIO (IN DOLLARS)					
RESIDENTIAL	5392913	5947795	1/1.10					
COM'L/INDUSTRIAL	504716	148954	1/.30					
AGRICULTURE/VACANT	460741	261621	1/.57					

SUMMARY OF COST OF COMMUNITY SERVICES STUDIES. REVENUE-TO-EXPENDITURE RATIOS IN DOLLAR

State/Town	Residential including farm houses	Combined Commercial & Industrial	Farm/Forest Open Land	Source
Connecticut				
Durham	1 : 1.07	1 : 0.27	1 : 0.23	Southern New England Forest Consortium, 1995
Farmington	1 : 1.33	1 : 0.32	1 : 0.31	Southern New England Forest Consortium, 1995
Hebron	1 : 1.06	1 : 0.47	1 : 0.43	American Farmland Trust, 1986
Litchfield	1 : 1.11	1 : 0.34	1 : 0.34	Southern New England Forest Consortium, 1995
Pomfret	1 : 1.06	1 : 0.27	1 : 0.36	Southern New England Forest Consortium, 1995
Maine				
Bethel	1 : 1.29	1 : 0.425	1 : 0.06	Thomas Good, Antioch New England Graduate School, 1994
Maryland				
Carroll County	1 : 1.15	1 : 0.48	1 : 0.45	Carroll County Dept. of Management & Budget, 1994
Frederick County	1 : 1.05	1 : 0.39	1 : 0.48	American Farmland Trust, 1997
Massachusetts				
Agawam	1 : 1.05	1 : 0.44	1 : 0.31	American Farmland Trust, 1992
Becker	1 : 1.02	1 : 0.83	1 : 0.72	Southern New England Forest Consortium, 1995
Deerfield	1 : 1.16	1 : 0.38	1 : 0.29	American Farmland Trust, 1992
Franklin	1 : 1.02	1 : 0.58	1 : 0.40	Southern New England Forest Consortium, 1995
Gill	1 : 1.15	1 : 0.43	1 : 0.38	American Farmland Trust, 1992
Leverett	1 : 1.15	1 : 0.29	1 : 0.25	Southern New England Forest Consortium, 1995
Westford	1 : 1.15	1 : 0.53	1 : 0.39	Southern New England Forest Consortium, 1995
Williamstown	1 : 1.11	1 : 0.40	1 : 0.34	Hazler et al., 1992
Minnesota				
Farmington	1 : 1.02	1 : 0.18	1 : 0.48	American Farmland Trust, 1994
Lake Elmo	1 : 1.07	1 : 0.20	1 : 0.27	American Farmland Trust, 1994
Independence	1 : 1.04	1 : 0.19	1 : 0.47	American Farmland Trust, 1994
New York				
Amenia	1 : 1.23	1 : 0.17	1 : 0.25	Bucknall, 1989
Beekman	1 : 1.12	1 : 0.18	1 : 0.48	American Farmland Trust, 1989
Farmington	1 : 1.22	1 : 0.27	1 : 0.72	Kinsman et al., 1991
Dix	1 : 1.51	1 : 0.27	1 : 0.31	Schuyler County League of Women Voters, 1993
Fishkill	1 : 1.23	1 : 0.31	1 : 0.74	Bucknall, 1989
Hector	1 : 1.30	1 : 0.15	1 : 0.28	Schuyler County League of Women Voters, 1993
Kinderhook	1 : 1.05	1 : 0.21	1 : 0.17	Concerned Citizens of Kinderhook, 1996
Montour	1 : 1.50	1 : 0.28	1 : 0.29	Schuyler County League of Women Voters, 1992
Northeast	1 : 1.36	1 : 0.29	1 : 0.21	American Farmland Trust, 1989
Reading	1 : 1.08	1 : 0.26	1 : 0.32	Schuyler County League of Women Voters, 1992
Red Hook	1 : 1.11	1 : 0.20	1 : 0.22	Bucknall, 1989
Ohio				
Madison Village	1 : 1.67	1 : 0.20	1 : 0.38	AFT and Lake County Ohio SWCD, 1993
Madison Township	1 : 1.40	1 : 0.25	1 : 0.30	AFT and Lake County Ohio SWCD, 1993
Pennsylvania				
Bethel Township	1 : 1.08	1 : 0.17	1 : 0.06	Tim Kelsey, 1992
Carroll Township	1 : 1.03	1 : 0.03	1 : 0.02	Tim Kelsey, 1992
Straban Township	1 : 1.10	1 : 0.11	1 : 0.06	Tim Kelsey, 1992
Rhode Island				
Hopkinton	1 : 1.08	1 : 0.31	1 : 0.31	Southern New England Forest Consortium, 1995
Little Compton	1 : 1.05	1 : 0.56	1 : 0.37	Southern New England Forest Consortium, 1995
West Greenwich	1 : 1.46	1 : 0.40	1 : 0.46	Southern New England Forest Consortium, 1995
Virginia				
Clarke County	1 : 1.26	1 : 0.21	1 : 0.15	Piedmont Environ. Council, Clarke County, Virginia, 1994
Wisconsin				
Dunn	1 : 1.06	1 : 0.29	1 : 0.18	Town of Dunn, 1994

Summary of Cost Community Services Studies Towns in New York				
Town	County	Residential (includes farm houses)	Commercial/ Industrial	Farms/ Forest
Greenwich	Washington	1.40	.13	.16
Hartford	"	1.39	.27	.12
Dryden	Tompkins	1.21	.32	.32
Enfield	"	1.11	.38	.38
Ithaca	"	1.09	.27	.27
Lansing	"	1.56	.16	.16
Amenia	Dutchess	1.23	.17	.25
Beekman	"	1.05	.44	.31
Fishkill	"	1.23	.31	.74
North East	"	1.36	.29	.21
Red Hook	"	1.11	.20	.22
Dix	Schuyler	1.51	.27	.31
Hector	"	1.30	.15	.28
Montour	"	1.50	.28	.29
Reading	"	1.08	.26	.32
Average		1.27	.26	.29

Sources: Washington County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan, Tompkins County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan, Cost of Community Services Study Dutchess County, Schuyler County League of Woman Voters Fiscal Impact Study. The methods used in these studies are based on a case study method developed by American Farmland Trust.

**Summary – Fire Department Service to Town and Village of Wilson
1997**

South Wilson Fire Company, Inc.
(Has no ambulance)

32 calls

Chief, Merritt Thilk

Category of land use	"Fire" calls	Mutual Aid	Total chargeable	%	Assignment of category share %
Residential/ Citizen-related	17	11 (1/2 of 8 ambulance calls involved equip. truck) (4+3=7 chargeable)	24	85.7	85
Com'l/Industrial	0	0	0	0	5
Agricultural/Vacant	4 grass fires	0	4	14.3	10
Total	21	11	28	100.0	100

Wilson Fire Company #1, Inc.
(Has ambulance)

355 calls

Chief, James Bowman

Category of land use	"Fire" calls	Mutual aid	Total chargeable	%	Assignment of category share %
Residential/Citizen-related	333	19	352	99.2	85
Com'l/Industrial	0	0	0	0.0	10
Agricultural/Vacant	3 grass fires	0	3	0.8	5
Total	336	19	355	100.0	100

Ransomville Fire Company, Inc. (for Town of Wilson service) 32 calls Chief, Todd Moltrup

Category of land use	"Fire" calls	Mutual aid	Total chargeable	%	Assignment of category share %
Residential/Citizen-related	29	0	29	90.6	85
Com'l/Industrial	0	0	0	0.0	5
Agricultural/Vacant	3	0	3	9.4	10
Total	32	0	32	100.0	100

Conversation with one fire chief suggested that the greater usage of rather expensive ambulances results in greater depreciation and other costs affecting the frequency of replacement of these vehicles compared to fire trucks. When fire trucks are replaced, the capital costs are high. In the absence of more specific information, the cost of an ambulance call is weighted the same as a fire call. Note: these are all-volunteer fire companies.

A study of the log of calls for the three fire companies serving the town and Village of Wilson for 1997 shows that the majority of calls are residential/ citizen-related with the balance in the form of grass fires. These were charged to agricultural/vacant although they could well have occurred on rural-residential parcels with acreage. Although no calls were made to commercial/industrial locations, 5% of the South Wilson and Ransomville Fire Companies' budgets were assigned to this category of land use since fire fighting ability is valued by commercial/ industrial property owners. With 15.5% of the Village of Wilson taxable property classified commercial/industrial, 10% of the Wilson #1 Fire Company's budget was assigned to this category of land use. Similarly, farm accidents and barn fires do not occur frequently but prompt and professional response to emergencies is necessary for the agricultural/vacant categories of land use. Assignment of budget share is shown in the tables above.

Notification was received from the Office of Emergency Management of payment to the Town of Wilson in the amount of \$3,171.89 for the January 1999 Snow Emergency.

A request was received from the Wilson Historical Society for the assistance of our two Town Constables for the annual Memorial Day Fair to be held on Monday, May 31, 1999.

A request was received from the Wilson Historical Society for permission to use the Town Hall parking lot on May 31, 1999 for its annual fair.

An invitation was received from Shirley Harper, Tri Town Clan 4-H Club , to attend a tree planting ceremony in honor of Nicholas C. Wagner, a 4-H Youth who passed away recently. The Tree will be planted at the Schoolhouse on the Wilson Historical Society grounds on May 1, 1999 at 1:15 p.m. in observance of National Arbor Day.

A Certificate of Appreciation was received from the United Way for a 66% increase in the contributions made to this year's campaign.

Mr. Paul E. Lehman, Niagara County Cooperative Extension, gave a brief report on the "Cost of Community Service Study" for the Town of Wilson prepared by the Cornell Cooperative Extension, Niagara County, as part of the Niagara County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan. The Board commended Mr. Lehman on the fine work he did in preparing this very detailed study.

Comments from Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan Hearing, 8/17/99

Clyde Burmaster, NC Legislator – the importance of educating the public, particularly the non-farm community, about the critical need to protect farmland and enhance the viability of farming operations in Niagara County cannot be overstated. There should be some organized effort to identify appropriate channels and settings within which to reach out to the community with regard to these issues.

Paul Bencal – comments on the possibility that some sort of funding mechanism, perhaps a “matching funds” arrangement, could be developed that would provide financial assistance to young people that are inhibited from becoming involved in farming as a vocation due to lack of resources.

Samuel Ferraro, Commissioner, Planning – don’t let the Protection Plan “lay on the shelf”. It is imperative that organizations and individuals be identified that can begin to actively implement the recommendations set out in the document. Develop criteria, etc. that can be used to assess the achievement of the goals contained in the plan. It is also important that the document remain a work in progress and that updates be systematically incorporated into the process to ensure the plan is consistent with needs as they evolve (every 4 – 5 years possibly). The importance of the county legislative body to the long-term acceptance and implementation of the plan is a critical element. Should consider the integration of the Protection Plan into the countywide comprehensive plan if the decision is made to develop one in the future.

Jim Bittner – question of where maps and aerial photos representing farmland utilization are kept and how accessible such resources are. Such renderings are valuable tools for analyzing the status of the situation and trends that may exist.

Samuel Ferraro, Commissioner, Planning – County planning keeps these resources in archive and makes them available upon request. The planning department is also working to develop the expertise and database necessary to procure GIS resources for reasons of analyzing farmland conversion trends, etc.

Paul Lehman – in his presentation stated that information was being gathered on the success of the Agriculture Industry, Development, Enhancement and Retention programs of Washington and Sullivan Counties. If research shows that this program could be beneficial to a county geographically placed like Niagara, with location of agri-services as they are, then it would be possible to apply to New York State Agriculture and Markets for planning funds up to the difference between the \$38,000 received so far and \$50,000 maximum.

Appendix F

State Environmental Quality Review

NEGATIVE DECLARATION

Notice of Determination of Non-Significance

Project Number _____

Date August 1999

This notice is issued pursuant to Part 617 of the implementing regulations pertaining to Article 8 (State Environmental Quality Review Act) of the Environmental Conservation Law.

The Niagara County Legislature, as lead agency, has determined that the proposed action described below will not have a significant effect on the environment and a Draft Environmental Impact Statement will not be prepared.

Name of Action: Niagara County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan

SEQR Status: Type I ☒
Unlisted ☐

Conditioned Negative Declaration: ☐ Yes
☒ No

Description of Action: Preparation and Adoption of an Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan for Niagara County

Location: (Include street address and the name of the municipality/county. A location map of appropriate scale is also recommended.)

Niagara County, as a whole
Office Address - Court House, Lockport, NY 14094

Reasons Supporting This Determination:

(See 617.6(g) for requirements of this determination; see 617.6(h) for Conditioned Negative Declaration)

The Niagara County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan identifies specific recommendations designed to enhance the preservation of the existing active farmlands in Niagara County. The majority of active farmland in Niagara County lays within six agricultural districts comprising over 52% of the county's total land area. There are no physical land use changes recommended in this 1999 Plan.

"The mission of the Niagara County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board is to be proactive in strengthening a profitable farm economy which will protect land for future generations." The recommendations contained within the Plan are designed to focus on this mission and emphasize educational strategies, agri-tourism enhancement, technical assistance, and economic development initiatives for plan implementation. This strategy for plan implementation does not identify or recommend any physical alteration of any lands as a means of accomplishing identified goals.

If Conditioned Negative Declaration, provide on attachment the specific mitigation measures imposed.

For Further Information:

Contact Person:

Address:

Telephone Number:

For Type I Actions and Conditioned Negative Declarations, a Copy of this Notice Sent to:

Commissioner, Department of Environmental Conservation, 50 Wolf Road, Albany, New York 12233-0001

Appropriate Regional Office of the Department of Environmental Conservation

Office of the Chief Executive Officer of the political subdivision in which the action will be principally located.

Applicant (if any)

Other involved agencies (if any)


SEP 24 1999

FROM: Commerce, Tourism & Agriculture DATE: 9/21/99 RESOLUTION # CT-043-99
Committee

APPROVED
 NIAGARA CO. ATTORNEY

COMMITTEE ACTION

LEGISLATIVE ACTION

By 

CT - 9/8/99

Approved: Ayes Abs. Noes 0
 Rejected: Ayes Abs. Noes
 Referred:

**RESOLUTION CALLING FOR THE ADOPTION OF AN AGRICULTURAL
 AND FARMLAND PROTECTION PLAN FOR NIAGARA COUNTY**

WHEREAS, the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets has made available to the counties of the State, funds for the development of Agricultural Plans intended to identify significant agricultural resources and proposed measures to protect and preserve such resources, and

WHEREAS, the Niagara County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board held a public information meeting on the draft Farmland Protection Plan on August 17, 1999 and solicited comments and will submit a copy of those comments with the proposed Plan, and

WHEREAS, approval of Niagara County's Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan by the county Legislature, and subsequent approval by the Commissioner of Agriculture and Markets, shall make Niagara County's Agricultural and Farmland Protection board eligible for State assistance payments for the implementation of approved agricultural protection plans pursuant to Article 25AA of the New York State Agricultural and Markets Law, now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, by the County of Niagara, as follows:

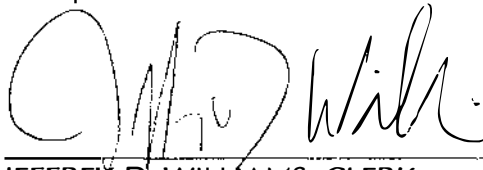
That pursuant to Article 25AA – Agricultural and Farmland Protection Programs of the New York State Agricultural and Markets Law, the County Legislature hereby approves the proposed Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan for the County of Niagara dated August 17, 1999, and shall submit the approved Plan to the Commissioner of the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets for final review and approval.


 COMMERCE, TOURISM & AGRICULTURE
 COMMITTEE

STATE OF NEW YORK)
) SS:
COUNTY OF NIAGARA)

This is to certify that I, the undersigned, Clerk of the Niagara County Legislature of the County of Niagara have compared the foregoing copy of resolution with the original resolution now on file in this office, and which was passed by the Niagara County Legislature, of said county on the 21st day of September, 1999 and that the same is correct and true transcript of such original resolution and of the whole thereof.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and the official seal of the Niagara County Legislature, this 23rd day of September 1999.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeffrey D. Williams", written over a horizontal line.

JEFFREY D. WILLIAMS, CLERK
NIAGARA COUNTY LEGISLATURE

